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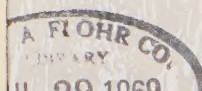

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EUGENE O'NEILL

"ANNA CHRISTIE"

ALL GOD'S CHILLUN GOT WINGS

DIFF'RENT

EUGENE O'NEILL

Plays

"ANNA CHRISTIE"
ALL GOD'S CHILLUN GOT WINGS
DIFF'RENT

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HORACE LIVERIGHT
1925

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Diff'rent, copyright, 1921, by
HORACE LIVERIGHT, INC.

First printing, July, 1925
Second printing, April, 1926
Third printing, October, 1926
Fourth printing, April, 1927
Fifth printing, March, 1928
Sixth printing, November, 1928
Seventh printing, August, 1929

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"ANNA CHRISTIE"

A Play in Four Acts

(1920)

SCENES

ACT I

"Johnny-the-Priest's" saloon near the water front, New York City.

ACT II

The barge, *Simeon Winthrop,* at anchor in the harbor of Provincetown, Mass. Ten days later.

ACT III

Cabin of the barge, at dock in Boston. A week later.

ACT IV

The same. Two days later.

CHARACTERS

"Johnny-the-Priest"
Two Longshoremen
A Postman
Larry, *bartender*
Chris. Christopherson, *captain of the barge* Simeon Winthro
Marthy Owen
Anna Christopherson, *Chris's daughter*
Three men of a steamer's crew
Mat Burke, *a stoker*
Johnson, *deckhand on the barge*

"ANNA CHRISTIE"

ACT ONE

"ANNA CHRISTIE"

ACT ONE

SCENE. *"JOHNNY-THE-PRIEST'S" saloon near South Street, New York City. The stage is divided into two sections, showing a small back room on the right. On the left, forward, of the barroom, a large window looking out on the street. Beyond it, the main entrance—a double swinging door. Farther back, another window. The bar runs from left to right nearly the whole length of the rear wall. In back of the bar, a small showcase displaying a few bottles of case goods, for which there is evidently little call. The remainder of the rear space in front of the large mirrors is occupied by half-barrels of cheap whisky of the "nickel-a-shot" variety, from which the liquor is drawn by means of spigots. On the right is an open doorway leading to the back room. In the back room are four round wooden tables with five chairs grouped about each. In the rear, a family entrance opening on a side street.*

It is late afternoon of a day in fall.

As the curtain rises, JOHNNY *is discovered. "*JOHNNY-THE-PRIEST*" deserves his nickname. With his pale, thin, clean-shaven face, mild blue eyes and white hair, a cassock would seem more suited to him than the apron he wears. Neither his voice nor his general manner dispel this illusion which has made him a personage of the water front. They are soft and bland. But beneath all his mildness one senses the man behind the mask—cynical, callous, hard as nails. He is lounging at ease*

behind the bar, a pair of spectacles on his nose, reading an evening paper.

Two longshoremen enter from the street, wearing their working aprons, the button of the union pinned conspicuously on the caps pulled sideways on their heads at an aggressive angle.

FIRST LONGSHOREMAN. (*as they range themselves at the bar*) Gimme a shock. Number Two. (*He tosses a coin on the bar*).

SECOND LONGSHOREMAN. Same here. (JOHNNY *sets two glasses of barrel whisky before them*).

FIRST LONGSHOREMAN. Here's luck! (*The other nods. They gulp down their whisky*).

SECOND LONGSHOREMAN. (*putting money on the bar*) Give us another.

FIRST LONGSHOREMAN. Gimme a scoop this time—lager and porter. I'm dry.

SECOND LONGSHOREMAN. Same here. (JOHNNY *draws the lager and porter and sets the big, foaming schooners before them. They drink down half the contents and start to talk together hurriedly in low tones. The door on the left is swung open and* LARRY *enters. He is a boyish, red-cheeked, rather good-looking young fellow of twenty or so*).

LARRY. (*nodding to* JOHNNY—*cheerily*) Hello, boss.

JOHNNY. Hello, Larry. (*With a glance at his watch*) Just on time. (LARRY *goes to the right behind the bar, takes off his coat, and puts on an apron*).

FIRST LONGSHOREMAN. (*abruptly*) Let's drink up and get back to it. (*They finish their drinks and go out left.* THE POSTMAN *enters as they leave. He exchanges nods with* JOHNNY *and throws a letter on the bar*).

THE POSTMAN. Addressed care of you, Johnny. Know him?

JOHNNY. (*picks up the letter, adjusting his spectacles.* LARRY *comes and peers over his shoulders.* JOHNNY *reads very slowly*) Christopher Christopherson.

THE POSTMAN. (*helpfully*) Square-head name.

LARRY. Old Chris—that's who.

JOHNNY. Oh, sure. I was forgetting Chris carried a hell of a name like that. Letters come here for him sometimes before, I remember now. Long time ago, though.

THE POSTMAN. It'll get him all right then?

JOHNNY. Sure thing. He comes here whenever he's in port.

THE POSTMAN. (*turning to go*) Sailor, eh?

JOHNNY. (*with a grin*) Captain of a coal barge.

THE POSTMAN. (*laughing*) Some job! Well, s'long.

JOHNNY. S'long. I'll see he gets it. (THE POSTMAN *goes out.* JOHNNY *scrutinizes the letter*) You got good eyes, Larry. Where's it from?

LARRY. (*after a glance*) St. Paul. That'll be in Minnesota, I'm thinkin'. Looks like a woman's writing, too, the old divil!

JOHNNY. He's got a daughter somewheres out West, I think he told me once. (*He puts the letter on the cash register*) Come to think of it, I ain't seen old Chris in a dog's age. (*Putting his overcoat on, he comes around the end of the bar*) Guess I'll be gettin' home. See you tomorrow.

LARRY. Good-night to ye, boss. (*As* JOHNNY *goes toward the street door, it is pushed open and* CHRISTOPHER CHRISTOPHERSON *enters. He is a short, squat, broad-shouldered man of about fifty, with a round, weather-beaten, red face from which his light blue eyes peer short-sightedly, twinkling with a simple good humor. His large mouth, overhung by a thick, drooping, yellow mustache, is childishly self-willed and weak, of an ob-*

stinate kindliness. A thick neck is jammed like a post into the heavy trunk of his body. His arms with their big, hairy, freckled hands, and his stumpy legs terminating in large flat feet, are awkwardly short and muscular. He walks with a clumsy, rolling gait. His voice, when not raised in a hollow boom, is toned down to a sly, confidential half-whisper with something vaguely plaintive in its quality. He is dressed in a wrinkled, ill-fitting dark suit of shore clothes, and wears a faded cap of gray cloth over his mop of grizzled, blond hair. Just now his face beams with a too-blissful happiness, and he has evidently been drinking. He reaches his hand out to JOHNNY).

CHRIS. Hello, Yohnny! Have drink on me. Come on, Larry. Give us drink. Have one yourself. (*Putting his hand in his pocket*) Ay gat money—plenty money. . .

JOHNNY. (*shakes* CHRIS *by the hand*) Speak of the devil. We was just talkin' about you.

LARRY. (*coming to the end of the bar*) Hello, Chris. Put it there. (*They shake hands*).

CHRIS. (*beaming*) Give us drink.

JOHNNY. (*with a grin*) You got a half-snootful now. Where'd you get it?

CHRIS. (*grinning*) Oder fallar on oder barge—Irish fallar —he gat bottle vhisky and we drank it, yust us two. Dot vhisky gat kick, by yingo! Ay yust come ashore. Give us drink, Larry. Ay vas little drunk, not much. Yust feel good. (*He laughs and commences to sing in a nasal, high-pitched quaver*).

"My Yosephine, come board de ship. Long time Ay vait for you. De moon, she shi-i-i-ine. She looka yust like you.

Tchee-tchee, tchee-tchee, tchee-tchee, tchee-tchee."

(*To the accompaniment of this last he waves his hand as if he were conducting an orchestra*).

JOHNNY. (*with a laugh*) Same old Yosie, eh Chris?

CHRIS. You don't know good song when you hear him. Italian fallar on oder barge, he learn me dat. Give us drink. (*He throws change on the bar*).

LARRY. (*with a professional air*) What's your pleasure, gentlemen?

JOHNNY. Small beer, Larry.

CHRIS. Vhisky—Number Two.

LARRY. (*as he gets their drinks*) I'll take a cigar on you.

CHRIS. (*lifting his glass*) Skoal! (*He drinks*).

JOHNNY. Drink hearty.

CHRIS. (*immediately*) Have oder drink.

JOHNNY. No. Some other time. Got to go home now. So you've just landed? Where are you in from this time?

CHRIS. Norfolk. Ve make slow voyage—dirty vedder—yust fog, fog, fog, all bloody time! (*There is an insistent ring from the doorbell at the family entrance in the back room.* CHRIS *gives a start—hurriedly*) Ay go open, Larry. Ay forgat. It vas Marthy. She come with me. (*He goes into the back room*).

LARRY. (*with a chuckle*) He's still got that same cow livin' with him, the old fool!

JOHNNY. (*with a grin*) A sport, Chris is. Well, I'll beat it home. S'long. (*He goes to the street door*).

LARRY. So long, boss.

JOHNNY. Oh—don't forget to give him his letter.

LARRY. I won't. (JOHNNY *goes out. In the meantime,* CHRIS *has opened the family entrance door, admitting* MARTHY. *She might be forty or fifty. Her jowly, mottled face, with its*

thick red nose, is streaked with interlacing purple veins. Her thick, gray hair is piled anyhow in a greasy mop on top of her round head. Her figure is flabby and fat; her breath comes in wheezy gasps; she speaks in a loud, mannish voice, punctuated by explosions of hoarse laughter. But there still twinkles in her blood-shot blue eyes a youthful lust for life which hard usage has failed to stifle, a sense of humor mocking, but good-tempered. She wears a man's cap, double-breasted man's jacket, and a grimy, calico skirt. Her bare feet are encased in a man's brogans several sizes too large for her, which gives her a shuffling, wobbly gait).

MARTHY. (*grumblingly*) What yuh tryin' to do, Dutchy—keep me standin' out there all day? (*She comes forward and sits at the table in the right corner, front*).

CHRIS. (*mollifyingly*) Ay'm sorry, Marthy. Ay talk to Yohnny. Ay forgat. What you goin' take for drink?

MARTHY. (*appeased*) Gimme a scoop of lager an' ale.

CHRIS. Ay go bring him back. (*He returns to the bar*) Lager and ale for Marthy, Larry. Vhisky for me. (*He throws change on the bar*).

LARRY. Right you are. (*Then remembering, he takes the letter from in back of the bar*) Here's a letter for you—from St. Paul, Minnesota—and a lady's writin'. (*He grins*).

CHRIS. (*quickly—taking it*) Oh, den it come from my daughter, Anna. She live dere. (*He turns the letter over in his hands uncertainly*) Ay don't gat letter from Anna—must be a year.

LARRY. (*jokingly*) That's a fine fairy tale to be tellin'—your daughter! Sure I'll bet it's some bum.

CHRIS. (*soberly*) No. Dis come from Anna. (*Engrossed*

by the letter in his hand—uncertainly) By golly, Ay tank Ay'm too drunk for read dis letter from Anna. Ay tank Ay sat down for a minute. You bring drinks in back room, Larry. (*He goes into the room on right*).

MARTHY. (*angrily*) Where's my lager an' ale, yuh big stiff?

CHRIS. (*preoccupied*) Larry bring him. (*He sits down opposite her.* LARRY *brings in the drinks and sets them on the table. He and* MARTHY *exchange nods of recognition.* LARRY *stands looking at* CHRIS *curiously.* MARTHY *takes a long draught of her schooner and heaves a huge sigh of satisfaction, wiping her mouth with the back of her hand.* CHRIS *stares at the letter for a moment—slowly opens it, and, squinting his eyes, commences to read laboriously, his lips moving as he spells out the words. As he reads his face lights up with an expression of mingled joy and bewilderment*).

LARRY. Good news?

MARTHY. (*her curiosity also aroused*) What's that yuh got —a letter, fur Gawd's sake?

CHRIS. (*pauses for a moment, after finishing the letter, as if to let the news sink in—then suddenly pounds his fist on the table with happy excitement*) Py yiminy! Yust tank, Anna say she's comin' here right avay! She gat sick on yob in St. Paul, she say. It's short letter, don't tal me much more'n dat. (*Beaming*) Py golly, dat's good news all at one time for ole fallar! (*Then turning to* MARTHY, *rather shamefacedly*) You know, Marthy, Ay've tole you Ay don't see my Anna since she vas little gel in Sveden five year ole.

MARTHY. How old'll she be now?

CHRIS. She must be—lat me see—she must be twenty year ole, py Yo!

LARRY. (*surprised*) You've not seen her in fifteen years?

CHRIS. (*suddenly growing somber—in a low tone*) No. Ven she vas little gel, Ay vas bo'sun on vindjammer. Ay never gat home only few time dem year. Ay'm fool sailor fallar. My voman—Anna's mother—she gat tired vait all time Sveden for me ven Ay don't never come. She come dis country, bring Anna, dey go out Minnesota, live with her cousins on farm. Den ven her mo'der die ven Ay vas on voyage, Ay tank it's better dem cousins keep Anna. Ay tank it's better Anna live on farm, den she don't know dat ole davil, sea, she don't know fa'der like me.

LARRY. (*with a wink at* MARTHY) This girl, now, 'll be marryin' a sailor herself, likely. It's in the blood.

CHRIS. (*suddenly springing to his feet and smashing his fist on the table in a rage*) No, py God! She don't do dat!

MARTHY. (*grasping her schooner hastily—angrily*) Hey, look out, yuh nut! Wanta spill my suds for me?

LARRY. (*amazed*) Oho, what's up with you? Ain't you a sailor yourself now, and always been?

CHRIS. (*slowly*) Dat's yust vhy Ay say it. (*Forcing a smile*) Sailor vas all right fallar, but not for marry gel. No. Ay know dat. Anna's mo'der, she know it, too.

LARRY. (*as* CHRIS *remains sunk in gloomy reflection*) When is your daughter comin'? Soon?

CHRIS. (*roused*) Py yiminy, Ay forgat. (*Reads through the letter hurriedly*) She say she come right avay, dat's all.

LARRY. She'll maybe be comin' here to look for you, I s'pose. (*He returns to the bar, whistling. Left alone with* MARTHY, *who stares at him with a twinkle of malicious humor*

in her eyes, CHRIS *suddenly becomes desperately ill-at-ease. He fidgets, then gets up hurriedly).*

CHRIS. Ay gat speak with Larry. Ay be right back. (*Mollifyingly*) Ay bring you oder drink.

MARTHY. (*emptying her glass*) Sure. That's me. (*As he retreats with the glass she guffaws after him derisively*).

CHRIS. (*to* LARRY *in an alarmed whisper*) Py yingo, Ay gat gat Marthy shore off barge before Anna come! Anna raise hell if she find dat out. Marthy raise hell, too, for go, py golly!

LARRY. (*with a chuckle*) Serve ye right, ye old divil—havin' a woman at your age!

CHRIS. (*scratching his head in a quandary*) You tal me lie for tal Marthy, Larry, so's she gat off barge quick.

LARRY. She knows your daughter's comin'. Tell her to get the hell out of it.

CHRIS. No. Ay don't like make her feel bad.

LARRY. You're an old mush! Keep your girl away from the barge, then. She'll likely want to stay ashore anyway. (*Curiously*) What does she work at, your Anna?

CHRIS. She stay on dem cousins' farm 'till two year ago. Dan she gat yob nurse gel in St. Paul. (*Then shaking his head resolutely*) But Ay don't vant for her gat yob now. Ay vant for her stay with me.

LARRY. (*scornfully*) On a coal barge! She'll not like that, I'm thinkin'.

MARTHY. (*shouts from next room*) Don't I get that bucket o' suds, Dutchy?

CHRIS. (*startled—in apprehensive confusion*) Yes, Ay come, Marthy.

LARRY. (*drawing the lager and ale, hands it to* CHRIS—*laugh-*

ing) Now you're in for it! You'd better tell her straight to get out!

CHRIS. (*shaking in his boots*) Py golly. (*He takes her drink in to* MARTHY *and sits down at the table. She sips it in silence.* LARRY *moves quietly close to the partition to listen, grinning with expectation.* CHRIS *seems on the verge of speaking, hesitates, gulps down his whisky desperately as if seeking for courage. He attempts to whistle a few bars of "Yosephine" with careless bravado, but the whistle peters out futilely.* MARTHY *stares at him keenly, taking in his embarrassment with a malicious twinkle of amusement in her eye.* CHRIS *clears his throat*) Marthy——

MARTHY. (*aggressively*) Wha's that? (*Then, pretending to fly into a rage, her eyes enjoying* CHRIS' *misery*) I'm wise to what's in back of your nut, Dutchy. Yuh want to git rid o' me, huh?—now she's comin'. Gimme the bum's rush ashore, huh? Lemme tell yuh, Dutchy, there ain't a square-head workin' on a boat man enough to git away with that. Don't start nothin' yuh can't finish!

CHRIS. (*miserably*) Ay don't start nutting, Marthy.

MARTHY. (*glares at him for a second—then cannot control a burst of laughter*) Ho-ho! Yuh're a scream, Square-head—an honest-ter-Gawd knockout! Ho-ho! (*She wheezes, panting for breath*).

CHRIS. (*with childish pique*) Ay don't see nutting for laugh at.

MARTHY. Take a slant in the mirror and yuh'll see. Ho-ho! (*Recovering from her mirth—chuckling, scornfully*) A square-head tryin' to kid Marthy Owen at this late day!—after me campin' with barge men the last twenty years. I'm wise to

the game, up, down, and sideways. I ain't been born and dragged up on the water front for nothin'. Think I'd make trouble, huh? Not me! I'll pack up me duds an' beat it. I'm quittin' yuh, get me? I'm tellin' yuh I'm sick of stickin' with yuh, and I'm leavin' yuh flat, see? There's plenty of other guys on other barges waitin' for me. Always was, I always found. (*She claps the astonished* CHRIS *on the back*) So cheer up, Dutchy! I'll be offen the barge before she comes. You'll be rid o' me for good—and me o' you—good riddance for both of us. Ho-ho!

CHRIS. (*seriously*) Ay don' tank dat. You vas good gel, Marthy.

MARTHY. (*grinning*) Good girl? Aw, can the bull! Well, yuh treated me square, yuhself. So it's fifty-fifty. Nobody's sore at nobody. We're still good frien's, huh? (LARRY *returns to bar*).

CHRIS. (*beaming now that he sees his troubles disappearing*) Yes, py golly.

MARTHY. That's the talkin'! In all my time I tried never to split with a guy with no hard feelin's. But what was yuh so scared about—that I'd kick up a row? That ain't Marthy's way. (*Scornfully*) Think I'd break my heart to loose yuh? Commit suicide, huh? Ho-ho! Gawd! The world's full o' men if that's all I'd worry about! (*Then with a grin, after emptying her glass*) Blow me to another scoop, huh? I'll drink your kid's health for yuh.

CHRIS. (*eagerly*) Sure tang. Ay go gat him. (*He takes the two glasses into the bar*) Oder drink. Same for both.

LARRY. (*getting the drinks and putting them on the bar*) She's not such a bad lot, that one.

CHRIS. (*jovially*) She's good gel, Ay tal you! Py golly, Ay calabrate now! Give me vhisky here at bar, too. (*He puts down money.* LARRY *serves him*) You have drink, Larry.

LARRY. (*virtuously*) You know I never touch it.

CHRIS. You don't know what you miss. Skoal! (*He drinks—then begins to sing loudly*).

"My Yosephine, come board de ship——"

(*He picks up the drinks for* MARTHY *and himself and walks unsteadily into the back room, singing*).

"De moon, she shi-i-i-ine. She looks yust like you.

Tchee-tchee, tchee-tchee, tchee-tchee, tchee-tchee."

MARTHY. (*grinning, hands to ears*) Gawd!

CHRIS. (*sitting down*) Ay'm good singer, yes? Ve drink, eh? Skoal! Ay calabrate! (*He drinks*) Ay calabrate 'cause Anna's coming home. You know, Marthy, Ay never write for her to come, 'cause Ay tank Ay'm no good for her. But all time Ay hope like hell some day she vant for see me and den she come. And dat's vay it happen now, py yiminy! (*His face beaming*) What you tank she look like, Marthy? Ay bet you she's fine, good, strong gel, pooty like hell! Living on farm made her like dat. And Ay bet you some day she marry good, steady land fallar here in East, have home all her own, have kits—and dan Ay'm ole grandfader, py golly! And Ay go visit dem every time Ay gat in port near! (*Bursting with joy*) By yiminy crickens, Ay calabrate dat! (*Shouts*) Bring oder drink, Larry! (*He smashes his fist on the table with a bang*).

LARRY. (*coming in from bar—irritably*) Easy there! Don't be breakin' the table, you old goat!

CHRIS. (*by way of reply, grins foolishly and begins to sing*) "My Yosephine, come board de ship——"

MARTHY. (*touching* CHRIS' *arm persuasively*) You're soused to the ears, Dutchy. Go out and put a feed into you. It'll sober you up. (*Then as* CHRIS *shakes his head obstinately*) Listen, yuh old nut! Yuh don't know what time your kid's liable to show up. Yuh want to be sober when she comes, don't yuh?

CHRIS. (*aroused—gets unsteadily to his feet*) Py golly, yes.

LARRY. That's good sense for you. A good beef stew'll fix you. Go round the corner.

CHRIS. All right. Ay be back soon, Marthy. (CHRIS *goes through the bar and out the street door*).

LARRY. He'll come round all right with some grub in him.

MARTHY. Sure. (LARRY *goes back to the bar and resumes his newspaper.* MARTHY *sips what is left of her schooner reflectively. There is the ring of the family entrance bell.* LARRY *comes to the door and opens it a trifle—then, with a puzzled expression, pulls it wide.* ANNA CHRISTOPHERSON *enters. She is a tall, blond, fully-developed girl of twenty, handsome after a large, Viking-daughter fashion but now run down in health and plainly showing all the outward evidences of belonging to the world's oldest profession. Her youthful face is already hard and cynical beneath its layer of make-up. Her clothes are the tawdry finery of peasant stock turned prostitute. She comes and sinks wearily in a chair by the table, left front*).

ANNA. Gimme a whisky—ginger ale on the side. (*Then, as* LARRY *turns to go, forcing a winning smile at him*) And don't be stingy, baby.

LARRY. (*sarcastically*) Shall I serve it in a pail?

ANNA. (*with a hard laugh*) That suits me down to the ground. (LARRY *goes into the bar. The two women size each*

other up with frank stares. LARRY *comes back with the drink which he sets before* ANNA *and returns to the bar again.* ANNA *downs her drink at a gulp. Then, after a moment, as the alcohol begins to rouse her, she turns to* MARTHY *with a friendly smile*) Gee, I needed that bad, all right, all right!

MARTHY. (*nodding her head sympathetically*) Sure—yuh look all in. Been on a bat?

ANNA. No—traveling—day and a half on the train. Had to sit up all night in the dirty coach, too. Gawd, I thought I'd never get here!

MARTHY. (*with a start—looking at her intently*) Where'd yuh come from, huh?

ANNA. St. Paul—out in Minnesota.

MARTHY. (*staring at her in amazement—slowly*) So—yuh're—— (*She suddenly bursts out into hoarse, ironical laughter*) Gawd!

ANNA. All the way from Minnesota, sure. (*Flaring up*) What you laughing at? Me?

MARTHY. (*hastily*) No, honest, kid. I was thinkin' of somethin' else.

ANNA. (*mollified—with a smile*) Well, I wouldn't blame you, at that. Guess I do look rotten—yust out of the hospital two weeks. I'm going to have another 'ski. What d'you say? Have something on me?

MARTHY. Sure I will. T'anks. (*She calls*) Hey, Larry! Little service! (*He comes in*).

ANNA. Same for me.

MARTHY. Same here. (LARRY *takes their glasses and goes out*).

ANNA. Why don't you come sit over here, be sociable. I'm

a dead stranger in this burg—and I ain't spoke a word with no one since day before yesterday.

MARTHY. Sure thing. (*She shuffles over to* ANNA's *table and sits down opposite her.* LARRY *brings the drinks and* ANNA *pays him*).

ANNA. Skoal! Here's how! (*She drinks*).

MARTHY. Here's luck! (*She takes a gulp from her schooner*).

ANNA. (*taking a package of Sweet Caporal cigarettes from her bag*) Let you smoke in here, won't they?

MARTHY. (*doubtfully*) Sure. (*Then with evident anxiety*) On'y trow it away if yuh hear someone comin'.

ANNA. (*lighting one and taking a deep inhale*) Gee, they're fussy in this dump, ain't they? (*She puffs, staring at the table top.* MARTHY *looks her over with a new penetrating interest, taking in every detail of her face.* ANNA *suddenly becomes conscious of this appraising stare—resentfully*) Ain't nothing wrong with me, is there? You're looking hard enough.

MARTHY. (*irritated by the other's tone—scornfully*) Ain't got to look much. I got your number the minute you stepped in the door.

ANNA. (*her eyes narrowing*) Ain't you smart! Well, I got yours, too, without no trouble. You're me forty years from now. That's you! (*She gives a hard little laugh*).

MARTHY. (*angrily*) Is that so? Well, I'll tell you straight, kiddo, that Marthy Owen never—— (*She catches herself up short—with a grin*) What are you and me scrappin' over? Let's cut it out, huh? Me, I don't want no hard feelin's with no one. (*Extending her hand*) Shake and forget it, huh?

ANNA. (*shakes her hand gladly*) Only too glad to. I ain't looking for trouble. Let's have 'nother. What d'you say?

MARTHY. (*shaking her head*) Not for mine. I'm full up. And you—— Had anythin' to eat lately?

ANNA. Not since this morning on the train.

MARTHY. Then yuh better go easy on it, hadn't yuh?

ANNA. (*after a moment's hesitation*) Guess you're right. I got to meet someone, too. But my nerves is on edge after that rotten trip.

MARTHY. Yuh said yuh was just outa the hospital?

ANNA. Two weeks ago. (*Leaning over to* MARTHY *confidentially*) The joint I was in out in St. Paul got raided. That was the start. The judge give all us girls thirty days. The others didn't seem to mind being in the cooler much. Some of 'em was used to it. But me, I couldn't stand it. It got my goat right—couldn't eat or sleep or nothing. I never could stand being caged up nowheres. I got good and sick and they had to send me to the hospital. It was nice there. I was sorry to leave it, honest!

MARTHY. (*after a slight pause*) Did yuh say yuh got to meet someone here?

ANNA. Yes. Oh, not what you mean. It's my Old Man I got to meet. Honest! It's funny, too. I ain't seen him since I was a kid—don't even know what he looks like—yust had a letter every now and then. This was always the only address he give me to write him back. He's yanitor of some building here now—used to be a sailor.

MARTHY. (*astonished*) Janitor!

ANNA. Sure. And I was thinking maybe, seeing he ain't never done a thing for me in my life, he might be willing to stake me to a room and eats till I get rested up. (*Wearily*) Gee, I sure need that rest! I'm knocked out. (*Then resign-*

edly) But I ain't expecting much from him. Give you a kick when you're down, that's what all men do. (*With sudden passion*) Men, I hate 'em—all of 'em! And I don't expect he'll turn out no better than the rest. (*Then with sudden interest*) Say, do you hang out around this dump much?

MARTHY. Oh, off and on.

ANNA. Then maybe you know him—my Old Man—or at least seen him?

MARTHY. It ain't old Chris, is it?

ANNA. Old Chris?

MARTHY. Chris Christopherson, his full name is.

ANNA. (*excitedly*) Yes, that's him! Anna Christopherson—that's my real name—only out there I called myself Anna Christie. So you know him, eh?

MARTHY. (*evasively*) Seen him about for years.

ANNA. Say, what's he like, tell me, honest?

MARTHY. Oh, he's short and——

ANNA. (*impatiently*) I don't care what he looks like. What kind is he?

MARTHY. (*earnestly*) Well, yuh can bet your life, kid, he's as good an old guy as ever walked on two feet. That goes!

ANNA. (*pleased*) I'm glad to hear it. Then you think's he'll stake me to that rest cure I'm after?

MARTHY. (*emphatically*) Surest thing you know. (*Disgustedly*) But where'd yuh get the idea he was a janitor?

ANNA. He wrote me he was himself.

MARTHY. Well, he was lyin'. He ain't. He's captain of a barge—five men under him.

ANNA. (*disgusted in her turn*) A barge? What kind of a barge?

MARTHY. Coal, mostly.

ANNA. A coal barge! (*with a harsh laugh*) If that ain't a swell job to find your long lost Old Man working at! Gee, I knew something'd be bound to turn out wrong—always does with me. That puts my idea of his giving me a rest on the bum.

MARTHY. What d'yuh mean?

ANNA. I s'pose he lives on the boat, don't he?

MARTHY. Sure. What about it? Can't you live on it, too?

ANNA. (*scornfully*) Me? On a dirty coal barge! What d'you think I am?

MARTHY. (*resentfully*) What d'yuh know about barges, huh? Bet yuh ain't never seen one. That's what comes of his bringing yuh up inland—away from the old devil sea—where yuh'd be safe—Gawd! (*The irony of it strikes her sense of humor and she laughs hoarsely*).

ANNA. (*angrily*) His bringing me up! Is that what he tells people! I like his nerve! He let them cousins of my Old Woman's keep me on their farm and work me to death like a dog.

MARTHY. Well, he's got queer notions on some things. I've heard him say a farm was the best place for a kid.

ANNA. Sure. That's what he'd always answer back—and a lot of crazy stuff about staying away from the sea—stuff I couldn't make head or tail to. I thought he must be nutty.

MARTHY. He is on that one point. (*Casually*) So yuh didn't fall for life on the farm, huh?

ANNA. I should say not! The old man of the family, his wife, and four sons—I had to slave for all of 'em. I was only a poor relation, and they treated me worse than they dare treat

a hired girl. (*After a moment's hesitation—somberly*) It was one of the sons—the youngest—started me—when I was sixteen. After that, I hated 'em so I'd killed 'em all if I'd stayed. So I run away—to St. Paul.

MARTHY. (*who has been listening sympathetically*) I've heard Old Chris talkin' about your bein' a nurse girl out there. Was that all a bluff yuh put up when yuh wrote him?

ANNA. Not on your life, it wasn't. It was true for two years. I didn't go wrong all at one jump. Being a nurse girl was yust what finished me. Taking care of other people's kids, always listening to their bawling and crying, caged in, when you're only a kid yourself and want to go out and see things. At last I got the chance—to get into that house. And you bet your life I took it! (*Defiantly*) And I ain't sorry neither. (*After a pause—with bitter hatred*) It was all men's fault—the whole business. It was men on the farm ordering and beating me—and giving me the wrong start. Then when I was a nurse, it was men again hanging around, bothering me, trying to see what they could get. (*She gives a hard laugh*) And now it's men all the time. Gawd, I hate 'em all, every mother's son of 'em! Don't you?

MARTHY. Oh, I dunno. There's good ones and bad ones, kid. You've just had a run of bad luck with 'em, that's all. Your Old Man, now—old Chris—he's a good one.

ANNA. (*sceptically*) He'll have to show me.

MARTHY. Yuh kept right on writing him yuh was a nurse girl still, even after yuh was in the house, didn't yuh?

ANNA. Sure. (*Cynically*) Not that I think he'd care a darn.

MARTHY. Yuh're all wrong about him, kid. (*Earnestly*) I know Old Chris well for a long time. He's talked to me 'bout you lots o' times. He thinks the world o' you, honest he does.

ANNA. Aw, quit the kiddin'!

MARTHY. Honest! Only, he's a simple old guy, see? He's got nutty notions. But he means well, honest. Listen to me, kid—— (*She is interrupted by the opening and shutting of the street door in the bar and by hearing* CHRIS' *voice*) Ssshh!

ANNA. What's up?

CHRIS. (*who has entered the bar. He seems considerably sobered up*) Py golly, Larry, dat grub taste good. Marthy in back?

LARRY. Sure—and another tramp with her. (CHRIS *starts for the entrance to the back room*).

MARTHY. (*to* ANNA *in a hurried, nervous whisper*) That's him now. He's comin' in here. Brace up!

ANNA. Who? (CHRIS *opens the door*).

MARTHY. (*as if she were greeting him for the first time*) Why hello, Old Chris. (*Then before he can speak, she shuffles hurriedly past him into the bar, beckoning him to follow her*) Come here. I wanta tell yuh somethin'. (*He goes out to her. She speaks hurriedly in a low voice*) Listen! I'm goin' to beat it down to the barge—pack up me duds and blow. That's her in there—your Anna—just come—waitin' for yuh. Treat her right, see? She's been sick. Well, s'long! (*She goes into the back room—to* ANNA) S'long, kid. I gotta beat it now. See yuh later.

ANNA. (*nervously*) So long. (MARTHY *goes quickly out of the family entrance*).

LARRY. (*looking at the stupefied* CHRIS *curiously*) Well, what's up now?

CHRIS. (*vaguely*) Nutting—nutting. (*He stands before the door to the back room in an agony of embarrassed emotion—then he forces himself to a bold decision, pushes open the door and walks in. He stands there, casts a shy glance at Anna, whose brilliant clothes, and, to him, high-toned appearance, awe him terribly. He looks about him with pitiful nervousness as if to avoid the appraising look with which she takes in his face, his clothes, etc.—his voice seeming to plead for her forbearance*) Anna!

ANNA. (*acutely embarrassed in her turn*) Hello—father. She told me it was you. I yust got here a little while ago.

CHRIS. (*goes slowly over to her chair*) It's good—for see you—after all dem years, Anna. (*He bends down over her. After an embarrassed struggle they manage to kiss each other*).

ANNA. (*a trace of genuine feeling in her voice*) It's good to see you, too.

CHRIS. (*grasps her arms and looks into her face—then overcome by a wave of fierce tenderness*) Anna lilla! Anna lilla! (*Takes her in his arms*).

ANNA. (*shrinks away from him, half-frightened*) What's that—Swedish? I don't know it. (*Then as if seeking relief from the tension in a voluble chatter*) Gee, I had an awful trip coming here. I'm all in. I had to sit up in the dirty coach all night—couldn't get no sleep, hardly—and then I had a hard job finding this place. I never been in New York before, you know, and——

CHRIS. (*who has been staring down at her face admiringly, not hearing what she says—impulsively*) You know you vas

awful pooty gel, Anna? Ay bet all men see you fall in love with you, py yiminy!

ANNA. (*repelled—harshly*) Cut it! You talk same as they all do.

CHRIS. (*hurt—humbly*) Ain't no harm for your fader talk dat vay, Anna.

ANNA. (*forcing a short laugh*) No—course not. Only—it's funny to see you and not remember nothing. You're like—a stranger.

CHRIS. (*sadly*) Ay s'pose. Ay never come home only few times ven you vas kit in Sveden. You don't remember dat?

ANNA. No. (*resentfully*) But why didn't you never come home them days? Why didn't you never come out West to see me?

CHRIS. (*slowly*) Ay tank, after your mo'der die, ven Ay vas avay on voyage, it's better for you you don't never see me! (*He sinks down in the chair opposite her dejectedly—then turns to her—sadly*) Ay don't know, Anna, vhy Ay never come home Sveden in ole year. Ay vant come home end of every voyage. Ay vant see your mo'der, your two bro'der before dey vas drowned, you ven you vas born—but—Ay—don't go. Ay sign on oder ships—go South America, go Australia, go China, go every port all over world many times—but Ay never go aboard ship sail for Sveden. Ven Ay gat money for pay passage home as passenger den—— (*He bows his head guiltily*) Ay forgat and Ay spend all money. Ven Ay tank again, it's too late. (*He sighs*) Ay don't know why but dat's vay with most sailor fallar, Anna. Dat ole davil sea make dem crazy fools with her dirty tricks. It's so.

ANNA. (*who has watched him keenly while he has been speaking—with a trace of scorn in her voice*) Then you think the sea's to blame for everything, eh? Well, you're still workin' on it, ain't you, spite of all you used to write me about hating it. That dame was here told me you was captain of a coal barge —and you wrote me you was yanitor of a building!

CHRIS. (*embarrassed but lying glibly*) Oh, Ay vork on land long time as yanitor. Yust short time ago Ay got dis yob cause Ay vas sick, need open air.

ANNA. (*sceptically*) Sick? You? You'd never think it.

CHRIS. And, Anna, dis ain't real sailor yob. Dis ain't real boat on sea. She's yust ole tub—like piece of land with house on it dat float. Yob on her ain't sea yob. No. Ay don't gat yob on sea, Anna, if Ay die first. Ay swear dat ven your mo'der die. Ay keep my word, py yingo!

ANNA. (*perplexed*) Well, I can't see no difference. (*Dismissing the subject*) Speaking of being sick, I been there myself—yust out of the hospital two weeks ago.

CHRIS. (*immediately all concern*) You, Anna? Py golly! (*Anxiously*) You feel better now, dough, don't you? You look little tired, dat's all!

ANNA. (*wearily*) I am. Tired to death. I need a long rest and I don't see much chance of getting it.

CHRIS. What you mean, Anna?

ANNA. Well, when I made up my mind to come to see you, I thought you was a yanitor—that you'd have a place where, maybe, if you didn't mind having me, I could visit a while and rest up—till I felt able to get back on the job again.

CHRIS. (*eagerly*) But Ay gat place, Anna—nice place. You

rest all you want, py yiminy! You don't never have to vork as nurse gel no more. You stay with me, py golly!

ANNA. (*surprised and pleased by his eagerness—with a smile*) Then you're really glad to see me—honest?

CHRIS. (*pressing one of her hands in both of his*) Anna, Ay like see you like hell, Ay tal you! And don't you talk no more about gatting yob. You stay with me. Ay don't see you for long time, you don't forgat dat. (*His voice trembles*) Ay'm gatting ole. Ay gat no one in vorld but you.

ANNA. (*touched—embarrassed by this unfamiliar emotion*) Thanks. It sounds good to hear someone—talk to me that way. Say, though—if you're so lonely—it's funny—why ain't you ever married again?

CHRIS. (*shaking his head emphatically—after a pause*) Ay love your mo'der too much for ever do dat, Anna.

ANNA. (*impressed—slowly*) I don't remember nothing about her. What was she like? Tell me.

CHRIS. Ay tal you all about everytang—and you tal me all tangs happen to you. But not here now. Dis ain't good place for young gel, anyway. Only no good sailor fallar come here for gat drunk. (*He gets to his feet quickly and picks up her bag*) You come with me, Anna. You need lie down, gat rest.

ANNA. (*half rises to her feet, then sits down again*) Where're you going?

CHRIS. Come. Ve gat on board.

ANNA. (*disappointedly*) On board your barge, you mean? (*Dryly*) Nix for mine! (*Then seeing his crestfallen look—forcing a smile*) Do you think that's a good place for a young girl like me—a coal barge?

CHRIS. (*dully*) Yes, Ay tank. (*He hesitates—then con-*

tinues more and more pleadingly) You don't know how nice it's on barge, Anna. Tug come and ve gat towed out on voyage—yust water all round, and sun, and fresh air, and good grub for make you strong, healthy gel. You see many tangs you don't see before. You gat moonlight at night, maybe; see steamer pass; see schooner make sail—see everytang dat's pooty. You need take rest like dat. You work too hard for young gel already. You need vacation, yes!

ANNA. (*who has listened to him with a growing interest—with an uncertain laugh*) It sounds good to hear you tell it. I'd sure like a trip on the water, all right. It's the barge idea has me stopped. Well, I'll go down with you and have a look—and maybe I'll take a chance. Gee, I'd do anything once.

CHRIS. (*picks up her bag again*) Ve go, eh?

ANNA. What's the rush? Wait a second. (*Forgetting the situation for a moment, she relapses into the familiar form and flashes one of her winning trade smiles at him*) Gee, I'm thirsty.

CHRIS. (*sets down her bag immediately—hastily*) Ay'm sorry, Anna. What you tank you like for drink, eh?

ANNA. (*promptly*) I'll take a—— (*Then suddenly reminded—confusedly*) I don't know. What'a they got here?

CHRIS. (*with a grin*) Ay don't tank dey got much fancy drink for young gel in dis place, Anna. Yinger ale—sas'prilla, maybe.

ANNA. (*forcing a laugh herself*) Make it sas, then.

CHRIS. (*coming up to her—with a wink*) Ay tal you, Anna, ve calabrate, yes—dis one time because ve meet after many year. (*In a half whisper, embarrassedly*) Dey gat good port vine, Anna. It's good for you, Ay tank—little bit—for give

you appetite. It ain't strong, neider. One glass don't go to your head, Ay promise.

ANNA. (*with a half hysterical laugh*) All right. I'll take port.

CHRIS. Ay go gat him. (*He goes out to the bar. As soon as the door closes,* ANNA *starts to her feet*).

ANNA. (*picking up her bag—half-aloud—stammeringly*) Gawd, I can't stand this! I better beat it. (*Then she lets her bag drop, stumbles over to her chair again, and covering her face with her hands, begins to sob*).

LARRY. (*putting down his paper as* CHRIS *comes up—with a grin*) Well, who's the blond?

CHRIS. (*proudly*) Dat vas Anna, Larry.

LARRY. (*in amazement*) Your daughter, Anna? (CHRIS *nods.* LARRY *lets a long, low whistle escape him and turns away embarrassedly*).

CHRIS. Don't you tank she vas pooty gel, Larry?

LARRY. (*rising to the occasion*) Sure! A peach!

CHRIS. You bet you! Give me drink for take back—one port vine for Anna—she calabrate dis one time with me—and small beer for me.

LARRY. (*as he gets the drinks*) Small beer for you, eh? She's reformin' you already.

CHRIS. (*pleased*) You bet! (*He takes the drinks. As she hears him coming,* ANNA *hastily dries her eyes, tries to smile.* CHRIS *comes in and sets the drinks down on the table—stares at her for a second anxiously—patting her hand*) You look tired, Anna. Vell, Ay make you take good long rest now. (*Picking up his beer*) Come, you drink vine. It put new life

in you. (*She lifts her glass—he grins*) Skoal, Anna! You know dat Svedish word?

ANNA. Skoal! (*downing her port at a gulp like a drink of whisky—her lips trembling*) Skoal? Guess I know that word, all right, all right!

(*The Curtain Falls*)

"ANNA CHRISTIE"

ACT TWO

ACT TWO

SCENE. *Ten days later. The stern of the deeply-laden barge,* Simeon Winthrop, *at anchor in the outer harbor of Provincetown, Mass. It is ten o'clock at night. Dense fog shrouds the barge on all sides, and she floats motionless on a calm. A lantern set up on an immense coil of thick hawser sheds a dull, filtering light on objects near it—the heavy steel bits for making fast the tow lines, etc. In the rear is the cabin, its misty windows glowing wanly with the light of a lamp inside. The chimney of the cabin stove rises a few feet above the roof. The doleful tolling of bells, on Long Point, on ships at anchor, breaks the silence at regular intervals.*

As the curtain rises, ANNA *is discovered standing near the coil of rope on which the lantern is placed. She looks healthy, transformed, the natural color has come back to her face. She has on a black oilskin coat, but wears no hat. She is staring out into the fog astern with an expression of awed wonder. The cabin door is pushed open and* CHRIS *appears. He is dressed in yellow oilskins—coat, pants, sou'wester—and wears high seaboots.*

CHRIS. (*the glare from the cabin still in his eyes, peers blinkingly astern*) Anna! (*Receiving no reply, he calls again, this time with apparent apprehension*) Anna!

ANNA. (*with a start—making a gesture with her hand as if to impose silence—in a hushed whisper*) Yes, here I am. What d'you want?

CHRIS. (*walks over to her—solicitously*) Don't you come

turn in, Anna? It's late—after four bells. It ain't good for you stay out here in fog, Ay tank.

ANNA. Why not? (*With a trace of strange exultation*) I love this fog! Honest! It's so—— (*She hesitates, groping for a word*) Funny and still. I feel as if I was—out of things altogether.

CHRIS. (*spitting disgustedly*) Fog's vorst one of her dirty tricks, py yingo!

ANNA. (*with a short laugh*) Beefing about the sea again? I'm getting so's I love it, the little I've seen.

CHRIS. (*glancing at her moodily*) Dat's foolish talk, Anna. You see her more, you don't talk dat vay. (*Then seeing her irritation, he hastily adopts a more cheerful tone*) But Ay'm glad you like it on barge. Ay'm glad it makes you feel good again. (*With a placating grin*) You like live like dis alone with ole fa'der, eh?

ANNA. Sure I do. Everything's been so different from anything I ever come across before. And now—this fog— Gee, I wouldn't have missed it for nothing. I never thought living on ships was so different from land. Gee, I'd yust love to work on it, honest I would, if I was a man. I don't wonder you always been a sailor.

CHRIS. (*vehemently*) Ay ain't sailor, Anna. And dis ain't real sea. You only see nice part. (*Then as she doesn't answer, he continues hopefully*) Vell, fog lift in morning, Ay tank.

ANNA. (*the exultation again in her voice*) I love it! I don't give a rap if it never lifts! (CHRIS *fidgets from one foot to the other worriedly.* ANNA *continues slowly, after a pause*) It makes me feel clean—out here—'s if I'd taken a bath.

CHRIS. (*after a pause*) You better go in cabin read book. Dat put you to sleep.

ANNA. I don't want to sleep. I want to stay out here—and think about things.

CHRIS. (*walks away from her toward the cabin—then comes back*) You act funny tonight, Anna.

ANNA. (*her voice rising angrily*) Say, what're you trying to do—make things rotten? You been kind as kind can be to me and I certainly appreciate it—only don't spoil it all now. (*Then, seeing the hurt expression on her father's face, she forces a smile*) Let's talk of something else. Come. Sit down here. (*She points to the coil of rope*).

CHRIS. (*sits down beside her with a sigh*) It's gatting pooty late in night, Anna. Must be near five bells.

ANNA. (*interestedly*) Five bells? What time is that?

CHRIS. Half past ten.

ANNA. Funny I don't know nothing about sea talk—but those cousins was always talking crops and that stuff. Gee, wasn't I sick of it—and of them!

CHRIS. You don't like live on farm, Anna?

ANNA. I've told you a hundred times I hated it. (*Decidedly*) I'd rather have one drop of ocean than all the farms in the world! Honest! And you wouldn't like a farm, neither. Here's where you belong. (*She makes a sweeping gesture seaward*) But not on a coal barge. You belong on a real ship, sailing all over the world.

CHRIS. (*moodily*) Ay've done dat many year, Anna, when Ay vas damn fool.

ANNA. (*disgustedly*) Oh, rats! (*After a pause she speaks*

musingly) Was the men in our family always sailors—as far back as you know about?

CHRIS. (*shortly*) Yes. Damn fools! All men in our village on coast, Sveden, go to sea. Ain't nutting else for dem to do. My fa'der die on board ship in Indian Ocean. He's buried at sea. Ay don't never know him only little bit. Den my tree bro'der, older'n me, dey go on ships. Den Ay go, too. Den my mo'der she's left all 'lone. She die pooty quick after dat—all 'lone. Ve vas all avay on voyage when she die. (*He pauses sadly*) Two my bro'der dey gat lost on fishing boat same like your bro'ders vas drowned. My oder bro'der, he save money, give up sea, den he die home in bed. He's only one dat ole davil don't kill. (*Defiantly*) But me, Ay bet you Ay die ashore in bed, too!

ANNA. Were all of 'em yust plain sailors?

CHRIS. Able body seaman, most of dem. (*With a certain pride*) Dey vas all smart seaman, too—A one. (*Then after hesitating a moment—shyly*) Ay vas bo'sun.

ANNA. Bo'sun?

CHRIS. Dat's kind of officer.

ANNA. Gee, that was fine. What does he do?

CHRIS. (*after a second's hesitation, plunged into gloom again by his fear of her enthusiasm*) Hard vork all time. It's rotten, Ay tal you, for go to sea. (*Determined to disgust her with sea life—volubly*) Dey're all fool fallar, dem fallar in our family. Dey all vork rotten yob on sea for nutting, don't care nutting but yust gat big pay day in pocket, gat drunk, gat robbed, ship avay again on oder voyage. Dey don't come home. Dey don't do anytang like good man do. And dat ole davil, sea, sooner, later she svallow dem up.

ANNA. (*with an excited laugh*) Good sports, I'd call 'em. (*Then hastily*) But say—listen—did all the women of the family marry sailors?

CHRIS. (*eagerly—seeing a chance to drive home his point*) Yes—and it's bad on dem like hell vorst of all. Dey don't see deir men only once in long while. Dey set and vait all 'lone. And vhen deir boys grows up, go to sea, dey sit and vait some more. (*Vehemently*) Any gel marry sailor, she's crazy fool! Your mo'der she tal you same tang if she vas alive. (*He relapses into an attitude of somber brooding*).

ANNA. (*after a pause—dreamily*) Funny! I do feel sort of—nutty, tonight. I feel old.

CHRIS. (*mystified*) Ole?

ANNA. Sure—like I'd been living a long, long time—out here in the fog. (*Frowning perplexedly*) I don't know how to tell you yust what I mean. It's like I'd come home after a long visit away some place. It all seems like I'd been here before lots of times—on boats—in this same fog. (*With a short laugh*) You must think I'm off my base.

CHRIS. (*gruffly*) Anybody feel funny dat vay in fog.

ANNA. (*persistently*) But why d'you s'pose I feel so—so—like I'd found something I'd missed and been looking for—'s if this was the right place for me to fit in? And I seem to have forgot—everything that's happened—like it didn't matter no more. And I feel clean, somehow—like you feel yust after you've took a bath. And I feel happy for once—yes, honest!—happier than I ever been anywhere before! (*As* CHRIS *makes no comment but a heavy sigh, she continues wonderingly*) It's nutty for me to feel that way, don't you think?

CHRIS. (*a grim foreboding in his voice*) Ay tank Ay'm damn fool for bring you on voyage, Anna.

ANNA. (*impressed by his tone*) You talk—nutty tonight yourself. You act 's if you was scared something was going to happen.

CHRIS. Only God know dat, Anna.

ANNA. (*half-mockingly*) Then it'll be Gawd's will, like the preachers say—what does happen.

CHRIS. (*starts to his feet with fierce protest*) No! Dat ole davil, sea, she ain't God! (*In the pause of silence that comes after his defiance a hail in a man's husky, exhausted voice comes faintly out of the fog to port*) "Ahoy!" (CHRIS *gives a startled exclamation*).

ANNA. (*jumping to her feet*) What's that?

CHRIS. (*who has regained his composure—sheepishly*) Py golly, dat scare me for minute. It's only some fallar hail, Anna—loose his course in fog. Must be fisherman's power boat. His engine break down, Ay guess. (*The "ahoy" comes again through the wall of fog, sounding much nearer this time.* CHRIS *goes over to the port bulwark*) Sound from dis side. She come in from open sea. (*He holds his hands to his mouth, megaphone-fashion, and shouts back*) Ahoy, dere! What's trouble?

THE VOICE. (*this time sounding nearer but up forward toward the bow*) Heave a rope when we come alongside. (*Then irritably*) Where are ye, ye scut?

CHRIS. Ay hear dem rowing. Dey come up by bow, Ay tank. (*Then shouting out again*) Dis vay!

THE VOICE. Right ye are! (*There is a muffled sound of oars in oar-locks*).

ANNA. (*half to herself—resentfully*) Why don't that guy stay where he belongs?

CHRIS. (*hurriedly*) Ay go up bow. All hands asleep 'cepting fallar on vatch. Ay gat heave line to dat fallar. (*He picks up a coil of rope and hurries off toward the bow.* ANNA *walks back toward the extreme stern as if she wanted to remain as much isolated as possible. She turns her back on the proceedings and stares out into the fog.* THE VOICE *is heard again shouting "Ahoy" and* CHRIS *answering "Dis vay." Then there is a pause —the murmur of excited voices—then the scuffling of feet.* CHRIS *appears from around the cabin to port. He is supporting the limp form of a man dressed in dungarees, holding one of the man's arms around his neck. The deckhand,* JOHNSON, *a young blond Swede, follows him, helping along another exhausted man similar fashion.* ANNA *turns to look at them.* CHRIS *stops for a second—volubly*) Anna! You come help, vill you? You find vhisky in cabin. Dese fallars need drink for fix dem. Dey vas near dead.

ANNA. (*hurrying to him*) Sure—but who are they? What's the trouble?

CHRIS. Sailor fallars. Deir steamer gat wrecked. Dey been five days in open boat—four fallars—only one left able stand up. Come, Anna. (*She precedes him into the cabin, holding the door open while he and* JOHNSON *carry in their burdens. The door is shut, then opened again as* JOHNSON *comes out.* CHRIS' *voice shouts after him*) Go gat oder fallar, Yohnson.

JOHNSON. Yes, sir. (*He goes. The door is closed again.* MAT BURKE *stumbles in around the port side of the cabin. He moves slowly, feeling his way uncertainly, keeping hold of the port bulwark with his right hand to steady himself. He is*

stripped to the waist, has on nothing but a pair of dirty dungaree pants. He is a powerful, broad-chested six-footer, his face handsome in a hard, rough, bold, defiant way. He is about thirty, in the full power of his heavy-muscled, immense strength. His dark eyes are bloodshot and wild from sleeplessness. The muscles of his arms and shoulders are lumped in knots and bunches, the veins of his fore-arms stand out like blue cords. He finds his way to the coil of hawser and sits down on it facing the cabin, his back bowed, head in his hands, in an attitude of spent weariness).

BURKE. (*talking aloud to himself*) Row, ye divil! Row! (*Then lifting his head and looking about him*) What's this tub? Well, we're safe anyway—with the help of God. (*He makes the sign of the cross mechanically.* JOHNSON *comes along the deck to port, supporting the fourth man, who is babbling to himself incoherently.* BURKE *glances at him disdainfully*) Is it losing the small wits ye iver had, ye are? Deck-scrubbing scut! (*They pass him and go into the cabin, leaving the door open.* BURKE *sags forward wearily*) I'm bate out—bate out entirely.

ANNA. (*comes out of the cabin with a tumbler quarter-full of whisky in her hand. She gives a start when she sees* BURKE *so near her, the light from the open door falling full on him. Then, overcoming what is evidently a feeling of repulsion, she comes up beside him*) Here you are. Here's a drink for you. You need it, I guess.

BURKE. (*lifting his head slowly—confusedly*) Is it dreaming I am?

ANNA. (*half smiling*) Drink it and you'll find it ain't no dream.

BURKE. To hell with the drink—but I'll take it just the same.

(*He tosses it down*) Ahah! I'm needin' that—and 'tis fine stuff. (*Looking up at her with frank, grinning admiration*) But 'twasn't the booze I meant when I said, was I dreaming. I thought you was some mermaid out of the sea come to torment me. (*He reaches out to feel of her arm*) Aye, rale flesh and blood, divil a less.

ANNA. (*coldly. Stepping back from him*) Cut that.

BURKE. But tell me, isn't this a barge I'm on—or isn't it?

ANNA. Sure.

BURKE. And what is a fine handsome woman the like of you doing on this scow?

ANNA. (*coldly*) Never you mind. (*Then half-amused in spite of herself*) Say, you're a great one, honest—starting right in kidding after what you been through.

BURKE. (*delighted—proudly*) Ah, it was nothing—aisy for a rale man with guts to him, the like of me. (*He laughs*) All in the day's work, darlin'. (*Then, more seriously but still in a boastful tone, confidentially*) But I won't be denying 'twas a damn narrow squeak. We'd all ought to be with Davy Jones at the bottom of the sea, be rights. And only for me, I'm telling you, and the great strength and guts is in me, we'd be being scoffed by the fishes this minute!

ANNA. (*contemptuously*) Gee, you hate yourself, don't you? (*Then turning away from him indifferently*) Well, you'd better come in and lie down. You must want to sleep.

BURKE. (*stung—rising unsteadily to his feet with chest out and head thrown back—resentfully*) Lie down and sleep, is it? Divil a wink I'm after having for two days and nights and divil a bit I'm needing now. Let you not be thinking I'm the like of them three weak scuts come in the boat with me. I could lick

the three of them sitting down with one hand tied behind me. They may be bate out, but I'm not—and I've been rowing the boat with them lying in the bottom not able to raise a hand for the last two days we was in it. (*Furiously, as he sees this is making no impression on her*) And I can lick all hands on this tub, wan be wan, tired as I am!

ANNA. (*sarcastically*) Gee, ain't you a hard guy! (*Then, with a trace of sympathy, as she notices him swaying from weakness*) But never mind that fight talk. I'll take your word for all you've said. Go on and sit down out here, anyway, if I can't get you to come inside. (*He sits down weakly*) You're all in, you might as well own up to it.

BURKE. (*fiercely*) The hell I am!

ANNA. (*coldly*) Well, be stubborn then for all I care. And I must say I don't care for your language. The men I know don't pull that rough stuff when ladies are around.

BURKE. (*getting unsteadily to his feet again—in a rage*) Ladies! Ho-ho! Divil mend you! Let you not be making game of me. What would ladies be doing on this bloody hulk? (*As* ANNA *attempts to go to the cabin, he lurches into her path*) Aisy, now! You're not the old Square-head's woman, I suppose you'll be telling me next—living in his cabin with him, no less! (*Seeing the cold, hostile expression on* ANNA's *face, he suddenly changes his tone to one of boisterous joviality*) But I do be thinking, iver since the first look my eyes took at you, that it's a fool you are to be wasting yourself—a fine, handsome girl—on a stumpy runt of a man like that old Swede. There's too many strapping great lads on the sea would give their heart's blood for one kiss of you!

ANNA. (*scornfully*) Lads like you, eh?

BURKE. (*grinning*) Ye take the words out o' my mouth. I'm the proper lad for you, if it's meself do be saying it. (*With a quick movement he puts his arms about her waist*) Whisht, now, me daisy! Himself's in the cabin. It's wan of your kisses I'm needing to take the tiredness from me bones. Wan kiss, now! (*He presses her to him and attempts to kiss her*).

ANNA. (*struggling fiercely*) Leggo of me, you big mutt! (*She pushes him away with all her might.* BURKE, *weak and tottering, is caught off his guard. He is thrown down backward and, in falling, hits his head a hard thump against the bulwark. He lies there still, knocked out for the moment.* ANNA *stands for a second, looking down at him frightenedly. Then she kneels down beside him and raises his head to her knee, staring into his face anxiously for some sign of life*).

BURKE. (*stirring a bit—mutteringly*) God stiffen it! (*He opens his eyes and blinks up at her with vague wonder*).

ANNA. (*letting his head sink back on the deck, rising to her feet with a sigh of relief*) You're coming to all right, eh? Gee, I was scared for a moment I'd killed you.

BURKE. (*with difficulty rising to a sitting position—scornfully*) Killed, is it? It'd take more than a bit of a blow to crack my thick skull. (*Then looking at her with the most intense admiration*) But, glory be, it's a power of strength is in them two fine arms of yours. There's not a man in the world can say the same as you, that he seen Mat Burke lying at his feet and him dead to the world.

ANNA. (*rather remorsefully*) Forget it. I'm sorry it happened, see? (*Burke rises and sits on bench. Then severely*) Only you had no right to be getting fresh with me. Listen, now, and don't go getting any more wrong notions. I'm on

this barge because I'm making a trip with my father. The captain's my father. Now you know.

BURKE. The old square—the old Swede, I mean?

ANNA. Yes.

BURKE. (*rising—peering at her face*) Sure I might have known it, if I wasn't a bloody fool from birth. Where else'd you get that fine yellow hair is like a golden crown on your head.

ANNA. (*with an amused laugh*) Say, nothing stops you, does it? (*Then attempting a severe tone again*) But don't you think you ought to be apologizing for what you said and done yust a minute ago, instead of trying to kid me with that mush?

BURKE. (*indignantly*) Mush! (*Then bending forward toward her with very intense earnestness*) Indade and I will ask your pardon a thousand times—and on my knees, if ye like. I didn't mean a word of what I said or did. (*Resentful again for a second*) But divil a woman in all the ports of the world has iver made a great fool of me that way before!

ANNA. (*with amused sarcasm*) I see. You mean you're a lady-killer and they all fall for you.

BURKE. (*offended. Passionately*) Leave off your fooling! 'Tis that is after getting my back up at you. (*Earnestly*) 'Tis no lie I'm telling you about the women. (*Ruefully*) Though it's a great jackass I am to be mistaking you, even in anger, for the like of them cows on the waterfront is the only women I've met up with since I was growed to a man. (*As* ANNA *shrinks away from him at this, he hurries on pleadingly*) I'm a hard, rough man and I'm not fit, I'm thinking, to be kissing the shoe-soles of a fine, dacent girl the like of yourself. 'Tis only the ignorance of your kind made me see you wrong. So

you'll forgive me, for the love of God, and let us be friends from this out. (*Passionately*) I'm thinking I'd rather be friends with you than have my wish for anything else in the world. (*He holds out his hand to her shyly*).

ANNA. (*looking queerly at him, perplexed and worried, but moved and pleased in spite of herself—takes his hand uncertainly*) Sure.

BURKE. (*with boyish delight*) God bless you! (*In his excitement he squeezes her hand tight*).

ANNA. Ouch!

BURKE. (*hastily dropping her hand—ruefully*) Your pardon, Miss. 'Tis a clumsy ape I am. (*Then simply—glancing down his arm proudly*) It's great power I have in my hand and arm, and I do be forgetting it at times.

ANNA. (*Nursing her crushed hand and glancing at his arm, not without a trace of his own admiration*) Gee, you're some strong, all right.

BURKE. (*delighted*) It's no lie, and why shouldn't I be, with me shoveling a million tons of coal in the stokeholes of ships since I was a lad only. (*He pats the coil of hawser invitingly*) Let you sit down, now, Miss, and I'll be telling you a bit of myself, and you'll be telling me a bit of yourself, and in an hour we'll be as old friends as if we was born in the same house. (*He pulls at her sleeve shyly*) Sit down now, if you plaze.

ANNA. (*with a half laugh*) Well—— (*She sits down*) But we won't talk about me, see? You tell me about yourself and about the wreck.

BURKE. (*flattered*) I'll tell you, surely. But can I be asking you one question, Miss, has my head in a puzzle?

ANNA. (*guardedly*) Well—I dunno—what is it?

BURKE. What is it you do when you're not taking a trip with the Old Man? For I'm thinking a fine girl the like of you ain't living always on this tub.

ANNA. (*uneasily*) No—of course I ain't. (*She searches his face suspiciously, afraid there may be some hidden insinuation in his words. Seeing his simple frankness, she goes on confidently*) Well, I'll tell you. I'm a governess, see? I take care of kids for people and learn them things.

BURKE. (*impressed*) A governess, is it? You must be smart, surely.

ANNA. But let's not talk about me. Tell me about the wreck, like you promised me you would.

BURKE. (*importantly*) 'Twas this way, Miss. Two weeks out we ran into the divil's own storm, and she sprang wan hell of a leak up for'ard. The skipper was hoping to make Boston before another blow would finish her, but ten days back we met up with another storm the like of the first, only worse. Four days we was in it with green seas raking over her from bow to stern. That was a terrible time, God help us. (*Proudly*) And if 'twasn't for me and my great strength, I'm telling you—and it's God's truth—there'd been mutiny itself in the stokehole. 'Twas me held them to it, with a kick to wan and a clout to another, and they not caring a damn for the engineers any more, but fearing a clout of my right arm more than they'd fear the sea itself. (*He glances at her anxiously, eager for her approval*).

ANNA. (*concealing a smile—amused by this boyish boasting of his*) You did some hard work, didn't you?

BURKE. (*promptly*) I did that! I'm a divil for sticking it

out when them that's weak give up. But much good it did anyone! 'Twas a mad, fightin' scramble in the last seconds with each man for himself. I disremember how it come about, but there was the four of us in wan boat and when we was raised high on a great wave I took a look about and divil a sight there was of ship or men on top of the sea.

ANNA. (*in a subdued voice*) Then all the others was drowned?

BURKE. They was, surely.

ANNA. (*with a shudder*) What a terrible end!

BURKE. (*turns to her*) A terrible end for the like of them swabs does live on land, maybe. But for the like of us does be roaming the seas, a good end, I'm telling you—quick and clane.

ANNA. (*struck by the word*) Yes, clean. That's yust the word for—all of it—the way it makes me feel.

BURKE. The sea, you mean? (*Interestedly*) I'm thinking you have a bit of it in your blood, too. Your Old Man wasn't only a barge rat—begging your pardon—all his life, by the cut of him.

ANNA. No, he was bo'sun on sailing ships for years. And all the men on both sides of the family have gone to sea as far back as he remembers, he says. All the women have married sailors, too.

BURKE. (*with intense satisfaction*) Did they, now? They had spirit in them. It's only on the sea you'd find rale men with guts is fit to wed with fine, high-tempered girls (*then he adds half-boldly*) the like of yourself.

ANNA. (*with a laugh*) There you go kiddin' again. (*Then seeing his hurt expression—quickly*) But you was going to tell me about yourself. You're Irish, of course I can tell that.

BURKE. (*stoutly*) Yes, thank God, though I've not seen a sight of it in fifteen years or more.

ANNA. (*thoughtfully*) Sailors never do go home hardly, do they? That's what my father was saying.

BURKE. He wasn't telling no lie. (*With sudden melancholy*) It's a hard and lonesome life, the sea is. The only women you'd meet in the ports of the world who'd be willing to speak you a kind word isn't woman at all. You know the kind I mane, and they're a poor, wicked lot, God forgive them. They're looking to steal the money from you only.

ANNA. (*her face averted—rising to her feet—agitatedly*) I think—I guess I'd better see what's doing inside.

BURKE. (*afraid he has offended her—beseechingly*) Don't go, I'm saying! Is it I've given you offense with my talk of the like of them? Don't heed it at all! I'm clumsy in my wits when it comes to talking proper with a girl the like of you. And why wouldn't I be? Since the day I left home for to go to sea punching coal, this is the first time I've had a word with a rale, dacent woman. So don't turn your back on me now, and we beginning to be friends.

ANNA. (*turning to him again—forcing a smile*) I'm not sore at you, honest.

BURKE. (*gratefully*) God bless you!

ANNA. (*changing the subject abruptly*) But if you honestly think the sea's such a rotten life, why don't you get out of it?

BURKE. (*surprised*) Work on land, is it? (*She nods. He spits scornfully*) Digging spuds in the muck from dawn to dark, I suppose? (*Vehemently*) I wasn't made for it, Miss.

ANNA. (*with a laugh*) I thought you'd say that.

BURKE. (*argumentatively*) But there's good jobs and bad

jobs at sea, like there'd be on land. I'm thinking if it's in the stokehole of a proper liner I was, I'd be able to have a little house and be home to it wan week out of four. And I'm thinking that maybe then I'd have the luck to find a fine dacent girl—the like of yourself, now—would be willing to wed with me.

ANNA. (*turning away from him with a short laugh—uneasily*) Why sure. Why not?

BURKE. (*edging up close to her—exultantly*) Then you think a girl the like of yourself might maybe not mind the past at all but only be seeing the good herself put in me?

ANNA. (*in the same tone*) Why, sure.

BURKE. (*passionately*) She'd not be sorry for it, I'd take my oath! 'Tis no more drinking and roving about I'd be doing then, but giving my pay day into her hand and staying at home with her as meek as a lamb each night of the week I'd be in port.

ANNA. (*moved in spite of herself and troubled by this half-concealed proposal—with a forced laugh*) All you got to do is find the girl.

BURKE. I have found her!

ANNA. (*half-frightenedly—trying to laugh it off*) You have? When? I thought you was saying——

BURKE. (*boldly and forcefully*) This night. (*Hanging his head—humbly*) If she'll be having me. (*Then raising his eyes to hers—simply*) 'Tis you I mean.

ANNA. (*is held by his eyes for a moment—then shrinks back from him with a strange, broken laugh*) Say—are you—going crazy? Are you trying to kid me? Proposing—to me!—for Gawd's sake!—on such short acquaintance? (CHRIS *comes out of the cabin and stands staring blinkingly astern. When he*

makes out Anna in such intimate proximity to this strange sailor, an angry expression comes over his face).

BURKE. (*following her—with fierce, pleading insistence*) I'm telling you there's the will of God in it that brought me safe through the storm and fog to the wan spot in the world where you was! Think of that now, and isn't it queer——

CHRIS. Anna! (*He comes toward them, raging, his fists clenched*) Anna, you gat in cabin, you hear!

ANNA. (*all her emotions immediately transformed into resentment at his bullying tone*) Who d'you think you're talking to—a slave?

CHRIS. (*hurt—his voice breaking—pleadingly*) You need gat rest, Anna. You gat sleep. (*She does not move. He turns on* BURKE *furiously*) What you doing here, you sailor fallar? You ain't sick like oders. You gat in fo'c's'tle. Dey give you bunk. (*Threateningly*) You hurry. Ay tal you!

ANNA. (*impulsively*) But he is sick. Look at him. He can hardly stand up.

BURKE. (*straightening and throwing out his chest—with a bold laugh*) Is it giving me orders ye are, me bucko? Let you look out, then! With wan hand, weak as I am, I can break ye in two and fling the pieces over the side—and your crew after you. (*Stopping abruptly*) I was forgetting. You're her Old Man and I'd not raise a fist to you for the world. (*His knees sag, he wavers and seems about to fall.* ANNA *utters an exclamation of alarm and hurries to his side*).

ANNA. (*taking one of his arms over her shoulder*) Come on in the cabin. You can have my bed if there ain't no other place.

BURKE. (*with jubilant happiness—as they proceed toward*

the cabin) Glory be to God, is it holding my arm about your neck you are! Anna! Anna! Sure it's a sweet name is suited to you.

ANNA. (*guiding him carefully*) Sssh! Sssh!

BURKE. Whisht, is it? Indade, and I'll not. I'll be roaring it out like a fog horn over the sea! You're the girl of the world and we'll be marrying soon and I don't care who knows it!

ANNA. (*as she guides him through the cabin door*) Ssshh! Never mind that talk. You go to sleep. (*They go out of sight in the cabin.* CHRIS, *who has been listening to* BURKE's *last words with open-mouthed amazement stands looking after them desperately*).

CHRIS. (*turns suddenly and shakes his fist out at the sea—with bitter hatred*) Dat's your dirty trick, damn ole davil, you! (*Then in a frenzy of rage*) But, py God, you don't do dat! Not while Ay'm living! No, py God, you don't!

(*The Curtain Falls*)

"ANNA CHRISTIE"

ACT THREE

ACT THREE

SCENE. *The interior of the cabin on the barge,* Simeon Winthrop (*at dock in Boston*)— *a narrow, low-ceilinged compartment the walls of which are painted a light brown with white trimmings. In the rear on the left, a door leading to the sleeping quarters. In the far left corner, a large locker-closet, painted white, on the door of which a mirror hangs on a nail. In the rear wall, two small square windows and a door opening out on the deck toward the stern. In the right wall, two more windows looking out on the port deck. White curtains, clean and stiff, are at the windows. A table with two cane-bottomed chairs stands in the center of the cabin. A dilapidated, wicker rocker, painted brown, is also by the table.*

It is afternoon of a sunny day about a week later. From the harbor and docks outside, muffled by the closed door and windows, comes the sound of steamers' whistles and the puffing snort of the donkey engines of some ship unloading nearby.

As the curtain rises, CHRIS *and* ANNA *are discovered.* ANNA *is seated in the rocking-chair by the table, with a newspaper in her hands. She is not reading but staring straight in front of her. She looks unhappy, troubled, frowningly concentrated on her thoughts.* CHRIS *wanders about the room, casting quick, uneasy side glances at her face, then stopping to peer absent-mindedly out of the window. His attitude betrays an overwhelming, gloomy anxiety which has him on tenterhooks. He pretends to be engaged in setting things ship-shape, but this occupation is confined to picking up some object, staring at it*

stupidly for a second, then aimlessly putting it down again. He clears his throat and starts to sing to himself in a low, doleful voice: "My Yosephine, come board de ship. Long time Ay vait for you."

ANNA. (*turning on him, sarcastically*) I'm glad someone's feeling good. (*Wearily*) Gee, I sure wish we was out of this dump and back in New York.

CHRIS. (*with a sigh*) Ay'm glad vhen ve sail again, too. (*Then, as she makes no comment, he goes on with a ponderous attempt at sarcasm*) Ay don't see vhy you don't like Boston, dough. You have good time here, Ay tank. You go ashore all time, every day and night veek ve've been here. You go to movies, see show, gat all kinds fun—— (*His eyes hard with hatred*) All with that damn Irish fallar!

ANNA. (*with weary scorn*) Oh, for heaven's sake, are you off on that again? Where's the harm in his taking me around? D'you want me to sit all day and night in this cabin with you—and knit? Ain't I got a right to have as good a time as I can?

CHRIS. It ain't right kind of fun—not with that fallar, no.

ANNA. I been back on board every night by eleven, ain't I? (*Then struck by some thought—looks at him with keen suspicion—with rising anger*) Say, look here, what d'you mean by what you yust said?

CHRIS. (*hastily*) Nutting but what Ay say, Anna.

ANNA. You said "ain't right" and you said it funny. Say, listen here, you ain't trying to insinuate that there's something wrong between us, are you?

CHRIS. (*horrified*) No, Anna! No, Ay svear to God, Ay never tank dat!

ANNA. (*mollified by his very evident sincerity—sitting down again*) Well, don't you never think it neither if you want me ever to speak to you again. (*Angrily again*) If I ever dreamt you thought that, I'd get the hell out of this barge so quick you couldn't see me for dust.

CHRIS. (*soothingly*) Ay wouldn't never dream—— (*Then after a second's pause, reprovingly*) You vas gatting learn to svear. Dat ain't nice for young gel, you tank?

ANNA. (*with a faint trace of a smile*) Excuse me. You ain't used to such language, I know. (*Mockingly*) That's what your taking me to sea has done for me.

CHRIS. (*indignantly*) No, it ain't me. It's dat damn sailor fallar learn you bad tangs.

ANNA. He ain't a sailor. He's a stoker.

CHRIS. (*forcibly*) Dat vas million times vorse, Ay tal you! Dem fallars dat vork below shoveling coal vas de dirtiest, rough gang of no-good fallars in vorld!

ANNA. I'd hate to hear you say that to Mat.

CHRIS. Oh, Ay tal him same tang. You don't gat it in head Ay'm scared of him yust 'cause he vas stronger'n Ay vas. (*Menacingly*) You don't gat for fight with fists with dem fallars. Dere's oder vay for fix him.

ANNA. (*glancing at him with sudden alarm*) What d'you mean?

CHRIS. (*sullenly*) Nutting.

ANNA. You'd better not. I wouldn't start no trouble with him if I was you. He might forget some time that you was old and my father—and then you'd be out of luck.

CHRIS. (*with smoldering hatred*) Vell, yust let him! Ay'm ole bird maybe, but Ay bet Ay show him trick or two.

ANNA. (*suddenly changing her tone—persuasively*) Aw come on, be good. What's eating you, anyway? Don't you want no one to be nice to me except yourself?

CHRIS. (*placated—coming to her—eagerly*) Yes, Ay do, Anna—only not fallar on sea. But Ay like for you marry steady fallar got good yob on land. You have little home in country all your own——

ANNA. (*rising to her feet—brusquely*) Oh, cut it out! (*Scornfully*) Little home in the country! I wish you could have seen the little home in the country where you had me in jail till I was sixteen! (*With rising irritation*) Some day you're going to get me so mad with that talk, I'm going to turn loose on you and tell you—a lot of things that'll open your eyes.

CHRIS. (*alarmed*) Ay don't vant——

ANNA. I know you don't; but you keep on talking yust the same.

CHRIS. Ay don't talk no more den, Anna.

ANNA. Then promise me you'll cut out saying nasty things about Mat Burke every chance you get.

CHRIS. (*evasive and suspicious*) Vhy? You like dat fallar —very much, Anna?

ANNA. Yes, I certainly do! He's a regular man, no matter what faults he's got. One of his fingers is worth all the hundreds of men I met out there—inland.

CHRIS. (*his face darkening*) Maybe you tank you love him, den?

ANNA. (*defiantly*) What of it if I do?

CHRIS. (*scowling and forcing out the words*) Maybe—you tank you—marry him?

ANNA. (*shaking her head*) No! (CHRIS' *face lights up with relief.* ANNA *continues slowly, a trace of sadness in her voice*) If I'd met him four years ago—or even two years ago—I'd have jumped at the chance, I tell you that straight. And I would now—only he's such a simple guy—a big kid—and I ain't got the heart to fool him. (*She breaks off suddenly*) But don't never say again he ain't good enough for me. It's me ain't good enough for him.

CHRIS. (*snorts scornfully*) Py yiminy, you go crazy, Ay tank!

ANNA. (*with a mournful laugh*) Well, I been thinking I was myself the last few days. (*She goes and takes a shawl from a hook near the door and throws it over her shoulders*) Guess I'll take a walk down to the end of the dock for a minute and see what's doing. I love to watch the ships passing. Mat'll be along before long, I guess. Tell him where I am, will you?

CHRIS. (*despondently*) All right, Ay tal him. (ANNA *goes out the doorway on rear.* CHRIS *follows her out and stands on the deck outside for a moment looking after her. Then he comes back inside and shuts the door. He stands looking out of the window—mutters—"Dirty ole davil, you." Then he goes to the table, sets the cloth straight mechanically, picks up the newspaper* ANNA *has let fall to the floor and sits down in the rocking-chair. He stares at the paper for a while, then puts it on table, holds his head in his hands and sighs drearily. The noise of a man's heavy footsteps comes from the deck outside and there is a loud knock on the door.* CHRIS *starts, makes a move as if to get up and go to the door, then thinks better of it and sits still. The knock is repeated—then as no answer*

comes, the door is flung open and MAT BURKE *appears.* CHRIS *scowls at the intruder and his hand instinctively goes back to the sheath knife on his hip.* BURKE *is dressed up—wears a cheap blue suit, a striped cotton shirt with a black tie, and black shoes newly shined. His face is beaming with good humor).*

BURKE. (*as he sees* CHRIS—*in a jovial tone of mockery*) Well, God bless who's here! (*He bends down and squeezes his huge form through the narrow doorway*) And how is the world treating you this afternoon, Anna's father?

CHRIS. (*sullenly*) Pooty goot—if it ain't for some faliars.

BURKE. (*with a grin*) Meaning me, do you? (*He laughs*) Well, if you ain't the funny old crank of a man! (*Then soberly*) Where's herself? (CHRIS *sits dumb, scowling, his eyes averted.* BURKE *is irritated by this silence*) Where's Anna, I'm after asking you?

CHRIS. (*hesitating—then grouchily*) She go down end of dock.

BURKE. I'll be going down to her, then. But first I'm thinking I'll take this chance when we're alone to have a word with you. (*He sits down opposite* CHRIS *at the table and leans over toward him*) And that word is soon said. I'm marrying your Anna before this day is out, and you might as well make up your mind to it whether you like it or no.

CHRIS. (*glaring at him with hatred and forcing a scornful laugh*) Ho-ho! Dat's easy for say!

BURKE. You mean I won't? (*Scornfully*) Is it the like of yourself will stop me, are you thinking?

CHRIS. Yes, Ay stop it, if it come to vorst.

BURKE. (*with scornful pity*) God help you!

CHRIS. But ain't no need for me do dat. Anna——

BURKE. (*smiling confidently*) Is it Anna you think will prevent me?

CHRIS. Yes.

BURKE. And I'm telling you she'll not. She knows I'm loving her, and she loves me the same, and I know it.

CHRIS. Ho-ho! She only have fun. She make big fool of you, dat's all!

BURKE. (*unshaken—pleasantly*) That's a lie in your throat, divil mend you!

CHRIS. No, it ain't lie. She tal me yust before she go out she never marry fallar like you.

BURKE. I'll not believe it. 'Tis a great old liar you are, and a divil to be making a power of trouble if you had your way. But 'tis not trouble I'm looking for, and me sitting down here. (*Earnestly*) Let us be talking it out now as man to man. You're her father, and wouldn't it be a shame for us to be at each other's throats like a pair of dogs, and I married with Anna. So out with the truth, man alive. What is it you're holding against me at all?

CHRIS. (*a bit placated, in spite of himself, by* BURKE's *evident sincerity—but puzzled and suspicious*) Vell—Ay don't vant for Anna gat married. Listen, you fallar. Ay'm a ole man. Ay don't see Anna for fifteen year. She vas all Ay gat in vorld. And now ven she come on first trip—you tank Ay vant her leave me 'lone again?

BURKE. (*heartily*) Let you not be thinking I have no heart at all for the way you'd be feeling.

CHRIS. (*astonished and encouraged—trying to plead persuasively*) Den you do right tang, eh? You ship avay again, leave Anna alone. (*Cajolingly*) Big fallar like you dat's on

sea, he don't need vife. He gat new gel in every port, you know dat.

BURKE. (*angrily for a second*) God stiffen you! (*Then controlling himself—calmly*) I'll not be giving you the lie on that. But divil take you, there's a time comes to every man, on sea or land, that isn't a born fool, when he's sick of the lot of them cows, and wearing his heart out to meet up with a fine dacent girl, and have a home to call his own and be rearing up children in it. 'Tis small use you're asking me to leave Anna. She's the wan woman of the world for me, and I can't live without her now, I'm thinking.

CHRIS. You forgat all about her in one veek out of port, Ay bet you!

BURKE. You don't know the like I am. Death itself wouldn't make me forget her. So let you not be making talk to me about leaving her. I'll not, and be damned to you! It won't be so bad for you as you'd make out at all. She'll be living here in the States, and her married to me. And you'd be seeing her often so—a sight more often than ever you saw her the fifteen years she was growing up in the West. It's quare you'd be the one to be making great trouble about her leaving you when you never laid eyes on her once in all them years.

CHRIS. (*guiltily*) Ay taught it vas better Anna stay away, grow up inland where she don't ever know ole davil, sea.

BURKE. (*scornfully*) Is it blaming the sea for your troubles ye are again, God help you? Well, Anna knows it now. 'Twas in her blood, anyway.

CHRIS. And Ay don't vant she ever know no-good fallar on sea——

BURKE. She knows one now.

CHRIS. (*banging the table with his fist—furiously*) Dat's yust it! Dat's yust what you are—no-good, sailor fallar! You tank Ay lat her life be made sorry by you like her mo'der's vas by me! No, Ay svear! She don't marry you if Ay gat kill you first!

BURKE. (*looks at him a moment, in astonishment—then laughing uproariously*) Ho-ho! Glory be to God, it's bold talk you have for a stumpy runt of a man!

CHRIS. (*threateningly*) Vell—you see!

BURKE. (*with grinning defiance*) I'll see, surely! I'll see myself and Anna married this day, I'm telling you. (*Then with contemptuous exasperation*) It's quare fool's blather you have about the sea done this and the sea done that. You'd ought to be 'shamed to be saying the like, and you an old sailor yourself. I'm after hearing a lot of it from you and a lot more that Anna's told me you do be saying to her, and I'm thinking it's a poor weak thing you are, and not a man at all!

CHRIS. (*darkly*) You see if Ay'm man—maybe quicker'n you tank.

BURKE. (*contemptuously*) Yerra, don't be boasting. I'm thinking 'tis out of your wits you've got with fright of the sea. You'd be wishing Anna married to a farmer, she told me. That'd be a swate match, surely! Would you have a fine girl the like of Anna lying down at nights with a muddy scut stinking of pigs and dung? Or would you have her tied for life to the like of them skinny, shriveled swabs does be working in cities?

CHRIS. Dat's lie, you fool!

BURKE. 'Tis not. 'Tis your own mad notions I'm after telling. But you know the truth in your heart, if great fear

of the sea has made you a liar and coward itself. (*Pounding the table*) The sea's the only life for a man with guts in him isn't afraid of his own shadow! 'Tis only on the sea he's free, and him roving the face of the world, seeing all things, and not giving a damn for saving up money, or stealing from his friends, or any of the black tricks that a landlubber'd waste his life on. 'Twas yourself knew it once, and you a bo'sun for years.

CHRIS. (*sputtering with rage*) You vas crazy fool, Ay tal you!

BURKE. You've swallowed the anchor. The sea give you a clout once, knocked you down, and you're not man enough to get up for another, but lie there for the rest of your life howling bloody murder. (*Proudly*) Isn't it myself the sea has nearly drowned, and me battered and bate till I was that close to hell I could hear the flames roaring, and never a groan out of me till the sea gave up and it seeing the great strength and guts of a man was in me?

CHRIS. (*scornfully*) Yes, you vas hell of fallar, hear you tal it!

BURKE. (*angrily*) You'll be calling me a liar once too often, me old bucko! Wasn't the whole story of it and my picture itself in the newspapers of Boston a week back? (*Looking* CHRIS *up and down belittlingly*) Sure I'd like to see you in the best of your youth do the like of what I done in the storm and after. 'Tis a mad lunatic, screeching with fear, you'd be this minute!

CHRIS. Ho-ho! You vas young fool! In ole years when Ay was on windyammer, Ay vas through hundred storms vorse'n dat! Ships vas ships den—and men dat sail on dem vas real

men. And now what you gat on steamers? You gat fallars on deck don't know ship from mudscow. (*With a meaning glance at* BURKE) And below deck you gat fallars yust know how for shovel coal—might yust as vell vork on coal vagon ashore!

BURKE. (*stung—angrily*) Is it casting insults at the men in the stokehole ye are, ye old ape? God stiffen you! Wan of them is worth any ten stock-fish-swilling Square-heads ever shipped on a windbag!

CHRIS. (*his face working with rage, his hand going back to the sheath-knife on his hip*) Irish svine, you!

BURKE. (*tauntingly*) Don't ye like the Irish, ye old bab-boon? 'Tis that you're needing in your family, I'm telling you —an Irishman and a man of the stokehole—to put guts in it so that you'll not be having grandchildren would be fearful cowards and jackasses the like of yourself!

CHRIS. (*half rising from his chair—in a voice choked with rage*) You look out!

BURKE. (*watching him intently—a mocking smile on his lips*) And it's that you'll be having, no matter what you'll do to prevent; for Anna and me'll be married this day, and no old fool the like of you will stop us when I've made up my mind.

CHRIS. (*with a hoarse cry*) You don't! (*He throws himself at* BURKE, *knife in hand, knocking his chair over backwards.* BURKE *springs to his feet quickly in time to meet the attack. He laughs with the pure love of battle. The old Swede is like a child in his hands.* BURKE *does not strike or mistreat him in any way, but simply twists his right hand behind his*

back and forces the knife from his fingers. He throws the knife into a far corner of the room—tauntingly).

BURKE. Old men is getting childish shouldn't play with knives. (*Holding the struggling* CHRIS *at arm's length—with a sudden rush of anger, drawing back his fist*) I've half a mind to hit you a great clout will put sense in your square head. Kape off me now, I'm warning you! (*He gives* CHRIS *a push with the flat of his hand which sends the old Swede staggering back against the cabin wall, where he remains standing, panting heavily, his eyes fixed on* BURKE *with hatred, as if he were only collecting his strength to rush at him again*).

BURKE. (*warningly*) Now don't be coming at me again, I'm saying, or I'll flatten you on the floor with a blow, if 'tis Anna's father you are itself! I've no patience left for you. (*Then with an amused laugh*) Well, 'tis a bold old man you are just the same, and I'd never think it was in you to come tackling me alone. (*A shadow crosses the cabin windows. Both men start.* ANNA *appears in the doorway*).

ANNA. (*with pleased surprise as she sees* BURKE) Hello, Mat. Are you here already? I was down—— (*She stops, looking from one to the other, sensing immediately that something has happened*) What's up? (*Then noticing the overturned chair—in alarm*) How'd that chair get knocked over? (*Turning on* BURKE *reproachfully*) You ain't been fighting with him, Mat—after you promised?

BURKE. (*his old self again*) I've not laid a hand on him, Anna. (*He goes and picks up the chair, then turning on the still questioning* ANNA—*with a reassuring smile*) Let you not be worried at all. 'Twas only a bit of an argument we was having to pass the time till you'd come.

ANNA. It must have been some argument when you got to throwing chairs. (*She turns on* CHRIS) Why don't you say something? What was it about?

CHRIS. (*relaxing at last—avoiding her eyes—sheepishly*) Ve vas talking about ships and fallars on sea.

ANNA. (*with a relieved smile*) Oh—the old stuff, eh?

BURKE. (*suddenly seeming to come to a bold decision—with a defiant grin at* CHRIS) He's not after telling you the whole of it. We was arguing about you mostly.

ANNA. (*with a frown*) About me?

BURKE. And we'll be finishing it out right here and now in your presence if you're willing. (*He sits down at the left of table*).

ANNA. (*uncertainly—looking from him to her father*) Sure. Tell me what it's all about.

CHRIS. (*advancing toward the table—protesting to* BURKE) No! You don't do dat, you! You tal him you don't vant for hear him talk, Anna.

ANNA. But I do. I want this cleared up.

CHRIS. (*miserably afraid now*) Vell, not now, anyvay. You vas going ashore, yes? You ain't got time——

ANNA. (*firmly*) Yes, right here and now. (*She turns to* BURKE) You tell me, Mat, since he don't want to.

BURKE. (*draws a deep breath—then plunges in boldly*) The whole of it's in a few words only. So's he'd make no mistake, and him hating the sight of me, I told him in his teeth I loved you. (*Passionately*) And that's God truth, Anna, and well you know it!

CHRIS. (*scornfully—forcing a laugh*) Ho-ho! He tal same tang to gel every port he go!

ANNA. (*shrinking from her father with repulsion—resentfully*) Shut up, can't you? (*Then to* BURKE—*feelingly*) I know it's true, Mat. I don't mind what he says.

BURKE. (*humbly grateful*) God bless you!

ANNA. And then what?

BURKE. And then—— (*Hesitatingly*) And then I said—— (*He looks at her pleadingly*) I said I was sure—I told him I thought you have a bit of love for me, too. (*Passionately*) Say you do, Anna! Let you not destroy me entirely, for the love of God! (*He grasps both her hands in his two*).

ANNA. (*deeply moved and troubled—forcing a trembling laugh*) So you told him that, Mat? No wonder he was mad. (*Forcing out the words*) Well, maybe it's true, Mat. Maybe I do. I been thinking and thinking—I didn't want to, Mat, I'll own up to that—I tried to cut it out—but—— (*She laughs helplessly*) I guess I can't help it anyhow. So I guess I do, Mat. (*Then with a sudden joyous defiance*) Sure I do! What's the use of kidding myself different? Sure I love you, Mat!

CHRIS. (*with a cry of pain*) Anna! (*He sits crushed*).

BURKE. (*with a great depth of sincerity in his humble gratitude*) God be praised!

ANNA. (*assertively*) And I ain't never loved a man in my life before, you can always believe that—no matter what happens.

BURKE. (*goes over to her and puts his arms around her*) Sure I do be believing ivery word you iver said or iver will say. And 'tis you and me will be having a grand, beautiful life together to the end of our days! (*He tries to kiss her. At first she turns away her head—then, overcome by a fierce impulse of passionate love, she takes his head in both her hands*

and holds his face close to hers, staring into his eyes. Then she kisses him full on the lips).

ANNA. (*pushing him away from her—forcing a broken laugh*) Good-by. (*She walks to the doorway in rear—stands with her back toward them, looking out. Her shoulders quiver once or twice as if she were fighting back her sobs*).

BURKE. (*too in the seventh heaven of bliss to get any correct interpretation of her word—with a laugh*) Good-by, is it? The divil you say! I'll be coming back at you in a second for more of the same! (*To* CHRIS, *who has quickened to instant attention at his daughter's good-by, and has looked back at her with a stirring of foolish hope in his eyes*) Now, me old bucko, what'll you be saying? You heard the words from her own lips. Confess I've bate you. Own up like a man when you're bate fair and square. And here's my hand to you—— (*Holds out his hand*) And let you take it and we'll shake and forget what's over and done, and be friends from this out.

CHRIS. (*with implacable hatred*) Ay don't shake hands with you fallar—not vhile Ay live!

BURKE. (*offended*) The back of my hand to you then, if that suits you better. (*Growling*) 'Tis a rotten bad loser you are, divil mend you!

CHRIS. Ay don't lose. (*Trying to be scornful and self-convincing*) Anna say she like you little bit but you don't hear her say she marry you, Ay bet. (*At the sound of her name* ANNA *has turned round to them. Her face is composed and calm again, but it is the dead calm of despair*).

BURKE. (*scornfully*) No, and I wasn't hearing her say the sun is shining either.

CHRIS. (*doggedly*) Dat's all right. She don't say it, yust same.

ANNA. (*quietly—coming forward to them*) No, I didn't say it, Mat.

CHRIS. (*eagerly*) Dere! You hear!

BURKE. (*misunderstanding her—with a grin*) You're waiting till you do be asked, you mane? Well, I'm asking you now. And we'll be married this day, with the help of God!

ANNA. (*gently*) You heard what I said, Mat—after I kissed you?

BURKE. (*alarmed by something in her manner*) No—I disremember.

ANNA. I said good-by. (*Her voice trembling*) That kiss was for good-by, Mat.

BURKE. (*terrified*) What d'you mane?

ANNA. I can't marry you, Mat—and we've said good-by. That's all.

CHRIS. (*unable to hold back his exultation*) Ay know it! Ay know dat vas so!

BURKE. (*jumping to his feet—unable to believe his ears*) Anna! Is it making game of me you'd be? 'Tis a quare time to joke with me, and don't be doing it, for the love of God.

ANNA. (*looking him in the eyes—steadily*) D'you think I'd kid you? No, I'm not joking, Mat. I mean what I said.

BURKE. Ye don't! Ye can't! 'Tis mad you are, I'm telling you!

ANNA. (*fixedly*) No, I'm not.

BURKE. (*desperately*) But what's come over you so sudden? You was saying you loved me——

ANNA. I'll say that as often as you want me to. It's true.

BURKE. (*bewilderedly*) Then why—what, in the divil's name—— Oh, God help me, I can't make head or tail to it at all!

ANNA. Because it's the best way out I can figure, Mat. (*Her voice catching*) I been thinking it over and thinking it over day and night all week. Don't think it ain't hard on me, too, Mat.

BURKE. For the love of God, tell me then, what is it that's preventing you wedding me when the two of us has love? (*Suddenly getting an idea and pointing at* CHRIS—*exasperately*) Is it giving heed to the like of that old fool ye are, and him hating me and filling your ears full of bloody lies against me?

CHRIS. (*getting to his feet—raging triumphantly before* ANNA *has a chance to get in a word*) Yes, Anna believe me. not you! She know her old fa'der don't lie like you.

ANNA. (*turning on her father angrily*) You sit down, d'you hear? Where do you come in butting in and making things worse? You're like a devil, you are! (*Harshly*) Good Lord, and I was beginning to like you, beginning to forget all I've got held up against you!

CHRIS. (*crushed feebly*) You ain't got nutting for hold against me, Anna.

ANNA. Ain't I yust! Well, lemme tell you—— (*She glances at* BURKE *and stops abruptly*) Say, Mat, I'm s'prised at you. You didn't think anything he'd said——

BURKE. (*glumly*) Sure, what else would it be?

ANNA. Think I've ever paid any attention to all his crazy bull? Gee, you must take me for a five-year-old kid.

BURKE. (*puzzled and beginning to be irritated at her too*)

I don't know how to take you, with your saying this one minute and that the next.

ANNA. Well, he has nothing to do with it.

BURKE. Then what is it has? Tell me, and don't keep me waiting and sweating blood.

ANNA. (*resolutely*) I can't tell you—and I won't. I got a good reason—and that's all you need to know. I can't marry you, that's all there is to it. (*Distractedly*) So, for Gawd's sake, let's talk of something else.

BURKE. I'll not! (*Then fearfully*) Is it married to someone else you are—in the West maybe?

ANNA. (*vehemently*) I should say not.

BURKE. (*regaining his courage*) To the divil with all other reasons then. They don't matter with me at all. (*He gets to his feet confidently, assuming a masterful tone*) I'm thinking you're the like of them women can't make up their mind till they're drove to it. Well, then, I'll make up your mind for you bloody quick. (*He takes her by the arms, grinning to soften his serious bullying*) We've had enough of talk! Let you be going into your room now and be dressing in your best and we'll be going ashore.

CHRIS. (*aroused—angrily*) No, py God, she don't do that! (*Takes hold of her arm*).

ANNA. (*who has listened to* BURKE *in astonishment. She draws away from him, instinctively repelled by his tone, but not exactly sure if he is serious or not—a trace of resentment in her voice*) Say, where do you get that stuff?

BURKE. (*imperiously*) Never mind, now! Let you go get dressed, I'm saying. (*Then turning to* CHRIS) We'll be seeing who'll win in the end—me or you.

CHRIS. (*to* ANNA—*also in an authoritative tone*) You stay right here, Anna, you hear! (ANNA *stands looking from one to the other of them as if she thought they had both gone crazy. Then the expression of her face freezes into the hardened sneer of her experience*).

BURKE. (*violently*) She'll not! She'll do what I say! You've had your hold on her long enough. It's my turn now.

ANNA. (*with a hard laugh*) Your turn? Say, what am I, anyway?

BURKE. 'Tis not what you are, 'tis what you're going to be this day—and that's wedded to me before night comes. Hurry up now with your dressing.

CHRIS. (*commandingly*) You don't do one tang he say, Anna! (ANNA *laughs mockingly*).

BURKE. She will, so!

CHRIS. Ay tal you she don't! Ay'm her fa'der.

BURKE. She will in spite of you. She's taking my orders from this out, not yours.

ANNA. (*laughing again*) Orders is good!

BURKE. (*turning to her impatiently*) Hurry up now, and shake a leg. We've no time to be wasting. (*Irritated as she doesn't move*) Do you hear what I'm telling you?

CHRIS. You stay dere, Anna!

ANNA. (*at the end of her patience—blazing out at them passionately*) You can go to hell, both of you! (*There is something in her tone that makes them forget their quarrel and turn to her in a stunned amazement.* ANNA *laughs wildly*) You're just like all the rest of them—you two! Gawd, you'd think I was a piece of furniture! I'll show you! Sit down now! (*As they hesitate—furiously*) Sit down and let me

talk for a minute. You're all wrong, see? Listen to me! I'm going to tell you something—and then I'm going to beat it. (*To* BURKE—*with a harsh laugh*) I'm going to tell you a funny story, so pay attention. (*Pointing to* CHRIS) I've been meaning to turn it loose on him every time he'd get my goat with his bull about keeping me safe inland. I wasn't going to tell you, but you've forced me into it. What's the dif? It's all wrong anyway, and you might as well get cured that way as any other. (*With hard mocking*) Only don't forget what you said a minute ago about it not mattering to you what other reason I got so long as I wasn't married to no one else.

BURKE. (*manfully*) That's my word, and I'll stick to it!

ANNA. (*laughing bitterly*) What a chance! You make me laugh, honest! Want to bet you will? Wait 'n see! (*She stands at the table rear, looking from one to the other of the two men with her hard, mocking smile. Then she begins, fighting to control her emotion and speak calmly*) First thing is, I want to tell you two guys something. You was going on 's if one of you had got to own me. But nobody owns me, see?—'cepting myself. I'll do what I please and no man, I don't give a hoot who he is, can tell me what to do! I ain't asking either of you for a living. I can make it myself—one way or other. I'm my own boss. So put that in your pipe and smoke it! You and your orders!

BURKE. (*protestingly*) I wasn't meaning it that way at all and well you know it. You've no call to be raising this rumpus with me. (*Pointing to* CHRIS) 'Tis him you've a right——

ANNA. I'm coming to him. But you—you did mean it that

way, too. You sounded—yust like all the rest. (*Hysterically*) But, damn it, shut up! Let me talk for a change!

BURKE. 'Tis quare, rough talk, that—for a dacent girl the like of you!

ANNA. (*with a hard laugh*) Decent? Who told you I was? (CHRIS *is sitting with bowed shoulders, his head in his hands. She leans over in exasperation and shakes him violently by the shoulder*) Don't go to sleep, Old Man! Listen here, I'm talking to you now!

CHRIS. (*straightening up and looking about as if he were seeking a way to escape—with frightened foreboding in his voice*) Ay don't vant for hear it. You vas going out of head, Ay tank, Anna.

ANNA. (*violently*) Well, living with you is enough to drive anyone off their nut. Your bunk about the farm being so fine! Didn't I write you year after year how rotten it was and what a dirty slave them cousins made of me? What'd you care? Nothing! Not even enough to come out and see me! That crazy bull about wanting to keep me away from the sea don't go down with me! You yust didn't want to be bothered with me! You're like all the rest of 'em!

CHRIS. (*feebly*) Anna! It ain't so——

ANNA. (*not heeding his interruption—revengefully*) But one thing I never wrote you. It was one of them cousins that you think is such nice people—the youngest son—Paul—that started me wrong. (*Loudly*) It wasn't none of my fault. I hated him worse'n hell and he knew it. But he was big and strong—(*pointing to Burke*)—like you!

BURKE. (*half springing to his feet—his fists clenched*) God blarst it! (*He sinks slowly back in his chair again, the*

knuckles showing white on his clenched hands, his face tense with the effort to suppress his grief and rage).

CHRIS. (*in a cry of horrified pain*) Anna!

ANNA. (*to him—seeming not to have heard their interruptions*) That was why I run away from the farm. That was what made me get a yob as nurse girl in St. Paul. (*With a hard, mocking laugh*) And you think that was a nice yob for a girl, too, don't you? (*Sarcastically*) With all them nice inland fellers yust looking for a chance to marry me, I s'pose. Marry me? What a chance! They wasn't looking for marrying. (*As* BURKE *lets a groan of fury escape him—desperately*) I'm owning up to everything fair and square. I was caged in, I tell you—yust like in yail—taking care of other people's kids—listening to 'em bawling and crying day and night—when I wanted to be out—and I was lonesome—lonesome as hell! (*With a sudden weariness in her voice*) So I give up finally. What was the use? (*She stops and looks at the two men. Both are motionless and silent.* CHRIS *seems in a stupor of despair, his house of cards fallen about him.* BURKE'S *face is livid with the rage that is eating him up, but he is too stunned and bewildered yet to find a vent for it. The condemnation she feels in their silence goads* ANNA *into a harsh, strident defiance*) You don't say nothing—either of you—but I know what you're thinking. You're like all the rest! (*To* CHRIS—*furiously*) And who's to blame for it, me or you? If you'd even acted like a man—if you'd even had been a regular father and had me with you—maybe things would be different!

CHRIS. (*in agony*) Don't talk dat vay, Anna! Ay go crazy! Ay von't listen! (*Puts his hands over his ears*).

ANNA. (*infuriated by his action—stridently*) You will too

listen! (*She leans over and pulls his hands from his ears—with hysterical rage*) You—keeping me safe inland—I wasn't no nurse girl the last two years—I lied when I wrote you—I was in a house, that's what!—yes, that kind of a house—the kind sailors like you and Mat goes to in port—and your nice inland men, too—and all men, God damn 'em! I hate 'em! Hate 'em! (*She breaks into hysterical sobbing, throwing herself into the chair and hiding her face in her hands on the table. The two men have sprung to their feet*).

CHRIS. (*whimpering like a child*) Anna! Anna! It's lie! It's lie! (*He stands wringing his hands together and begins to weep*).

BURKE. (*his whole great body tense like a spring—dully and gropingly*) So that's what's in it!

ANNA. (*raising her head at the sound of his voice—with extreme mocking bitterness*) I s'pose you remember your promise, Mat? No other reason was to count with you so long as I wasn't married already. So I s'pose you want me to get dressed and go ashore, don't you? (*She laughs*) Yes, you do!

BURKE. (*on the verge of his outbreak—stammeringly*) God stiffen you!

ANNA. (*trying to keep up her hard, bitter tone, but gradually letting a note of pitiful pleading creep in*) I s'pose if I tried to tell you I wasn't—that—no more you'd believe me, wouldn't you? Yes, you would! And if I told you that yust getting out in this barge, and being on the sea had changed me and made me feel different about things, 's if all I'd been through wasn't me and didn't count and was yust like it never happened—you'd laugh, wouldn't you? And you'd die laugh-

ing sure if I said that meeting you that funny way that night in the fog, and afterwards seeing that you was straight goods stuck on me, had got me to thinking for the first time, and I sized you up as a different kind of man—a sea man as different from the ones on land as water is from mud—and that was why I got stuck on you, too. I wanted to marry you and fool you, but I couldn't. Don't you see how I've changed? I couldn't marry you with you believing a lie—and I was shamed to tell you the truth—till the both of you forced my hand, and I seen you was the same as all the rest. And now, give me a bawling out and beat it, like I can tell you're going to. (*She stops, looking at* BURKE. *He is silent, his face averted, his features beginning to work with fury. She pleads passionately*) Will you believe it if I tell you that loving you has made me—clean? It's the straight goods, honest! (*Then as he doesn't reply—bitterly*) Like hell you will! You're like all the rest!

BURKE. (*blazing out—turning on her in a perfect frenzy of rage—his voice trembling with passion*) The rest, is it? God's curse on you! Clane, is it? You slut, you, I'll be killing you now! (*He picks up the chair on which he has been sitting and, swinging it high over his shoulder, springs toward her.* CHRIS *rushes forward with a cry of alarm, trying to ward off the blow from his daughter.* ANNA *looks up into* BURKE'S *eyes with the fearlessness of despair.* BURKE *checks himself, the chair held in the air*).

CHRIS. (*wildly*) Stop, you crazy fool! You vant for murder her!

ANNA. (*pushing her father away brusquely, her eyes still holding* BURKE'S) Keep out of this, you! (*To* BURKE—*dully*)

Well, ain't you got the nerve to do it? Go ahead! I'll be thankful to you, honest. I'm sick of the whole game.

BURKE. (*throwing the chair away into a corner of the room —helplessly*) I can't do it, God help me, and your two eyes looking at me. (*Furiously*) Though I do be thinking I'd have a good right to smash your skull like a rotten egg. Was there iver a woman in the world had the rottenness in her that you have, and was there iver a man the like of me was made the fool of the world, and me thinking thoughts about you, and having great love for you, and dreaming dreams of the fine life we'd have when we'd be wedded! (*His voice high pitched in a lamentation that is like a keen*) Yerra, God help me! I'm destroyed entirely and my heart is broken in bits! I'm asking God Himself, was it for this He'd have me roaming the earth since I was a lad only, to come to black shame in the end, where I'd be giving a power of love to a woman is the same as others you'd meet in any hooker-shanty in port, with red gowns on them and paint on their grinning mugs, would be sleeping with any man for a dollar or two!

ANNA. (*in a scream*) Don't, Mat! For Gawd's sake! (*Then raging and pounding on the table with her hands*) Get out of here! Leave me alone! Get out of here!

BURKE. (*his anger rushing back on him*) I'll be going, surely! And I'll be drinking sloos of whisky will wash that black kiss of yours off my lips; and I'll be getting dead rotten drunk so I'll not remember if 'twas iver born you was at all; and I'll be shipping away on some boat will take me to the other end of the world where I'll never see your face again! (*He turns toward the door*).

CHRIS. (*who has been standing in a stupor—suddenly grasp-*

ing BURKE *by the arm—stupidly*) No, you don't go. Ay tank maybe it's better Anna marry you now.

BURKE. (*shaking* CHRIS *off—furiously*) Lave go of me, ye old ape! Marry her, is it? I'd see her roasting in hell first! I'm shipping away out of this, I'm telling you! (*Pointing to* ANNA—*passionately*) And my curse on you and the curse of Almighty God and all the Saints! You've destroyed me this day and may you lie awake in the long nights, tormented with thoughts of Mat Burke and the great wrong you've done him!

ANNA. (*in anguish*) Mat! (*But he turns without another word and strides out of the doorway.* ANNA *looks after him wildly, starts to run after him, then hides her face in her outstretched arms, sobbing.* CHRIS *stands in a stupor, staring at the floor*).

CHRIS. (*after a pause, dully*) Ay tank Ay go ashore, too.

ANNA. (*looking up, wildly*) Not after him! Let him go! Don't you dare——

CHRIS. (*somberly*) Ay go for gat drink.

ANNA. (*with a harsh laugh*) So I'm driving you to drink, too, eh? I s'pose you want to get drunk so's you can forget —like him?

CHRIS. (*bursting out angrily*) Yes, Ay vant! You tank Ay like hear dem tangs. (*Breaking down—weeping*) Ay tank you vasn't dat kind of gel, Anna.

ANNA. (*mockingly*) And I s'pose you want me to beat it, don't you? You don't want me here disgracing you, I s'pose?

CHRIS. No, you stay here! (*Goes over and pats her on the shoulder, the tears running down his face*) Ain't your fault, Anna, Ay know dat. (*She looks up at him, softened. He bursts*

into rage) It's dat ole davil, sea, do this to me! (*He shakes his fist at the door*) It's her dirty tricks! It vas all right on barge with yust you and me. Den she bring dat Irish fallar in fog, she make you like him, she make you fight with me all time! If dat Irish fallar don't never come, you don't never tal me dem tangs, Ay don't never know, and everytang's all right. (*He shakes his fist again*) Dirty ole davil!

ANNA. (*with spent weariness*) Oh, what's the use? Go on ashore and get drunk.

CHRIS. (*goes into room on left and gets his cap. He goes to the door, silent and stupid—then turns*) You vait here, Anna?

ANNA. (*dully*) Maybe—and maybe not. Maybe I'll get drunk, too. Maybe I'll—— But what the hell do you care what I do? Go on and beat it. (CHRIS *turns stupidly and goes out.* ANNA *sits at the table, staring straight in front of her*).

(*The Curtain Falls*)

"ANNA CHRISTIE"

ACT FOUR

ACT FOUR

SCENE. *Same as Act Three, about nine o'clock of a foggy night two days later. The whistles of steamers in the harbor can be heard. The cabin is lighted by a small lamp on the table. A suit case stands in the middle of the floor.* ANNA *is sitting in the rocking-chair. She wears a hat, is all dressed up as in Act One. Her face is pale, looks terribly tired and worn, as if the two days just past had been ones of suffering and sleepless nights. She stares before her despondently, her chin in her hands. There is a timid knock on the door in rear.* ANNA *jumps to her feet with a startled exclamation and looks toward the door with an expression of mingled hope and fear.*

ANNA. (*faintly*) Come in. (*Then summoning her courage —more resolutely*) Come in. (*The door is opened and* CHRIS *appears in the doorway. He is in a very bleary, bedraggled condition, suffering from the after effects of his drunk. A tin pail full of foaming beer is in his hand. He comes forward, his eyes avoiding* ANNA's. *He mutters stupidly*) It's foggy.

ANNA. (*looking him over with contempt*) So you come back at last, did you? You're a fine looking sight! (*Then jeeringly*) I thought you'd beaten it for good on account of the disgrace I'd brought on you.

CHRIS. (*wincing—faintly*) Don't say dat, Anna, please! (*He sits in a chair by the table, setting down the can of beer, holding his head in his hands*).

ANNA. (*looks at him with a certain sympathy*) What's the trouble? Feeling sick?

CHRIS. (*dully*) Inside my head feel sick.

ANNA. Well, what d'you expect after being soused for two days? (*Resentfully*) It serves you right. A fine thing—you leaving me alone on this barge all that time!

CHRIS. (*humbly*) Ay'm sorry, Anna.

ANNA. (*scornfully*) Sorry!

CHRIS. But Ay'm not sick inside head vay you mean. Ay'm sick from tank too much about you, about me.

ANNA. And how about me? D'you suppose I ain't been thinking, too?

CHRIS. Ay'm sorry, Anna. (*He sees her bag and gives a start*) You pack your bag, Anna? You vas going——?

ANNA. (*forcibly*) Yes, I was going right back to what you think.

CHRIS. Anna!

ANNA. I went ashore to get a train for New York. I'd been waiting and waiting 'till I was sick of it. Then I changed my mind and decided not to go today. But I'm going first thing tomorrow, so it'll all be the same in the end.

CHRIS. (*raising his head—pleadingly*) No, you never do dat, Anna!

ANNA. (*with a sneer*) Why not, I'd like to know?

CHRIS. You don't never gat to do—dat vay—no more, Ay tal you. Ay fix dat up all right.

ANNA. (*suspiciously*) Fix what up?

CHRIS. (*not seeming to have heard her question—sadly*) You vas vaiting, you say? You vasn't vaiting for me, Ay bet.

ANNA. (*callously*) You'd win.

CHRIS. For dat Irish fallar?

ANNA. (*defiantly*) Yes—if you want to know! (*Then with a forlorn laugh*) If he did come back it'd only be 'cause he wanted to beat me up or kill me, I suppose. But even if he did, I'd rather have him come than not show up at all. I wouldn't care what he did.

CHRIS. Ay guess it's true you vas in love with him all right.

ANNA. You guess!

CHRIS. (*turning to her earnestly*) And Ay'm sorry for you like hell he don't come, Anna!

ANNA. (*softened*) Seems to me you've changed your tune a lot.

CHRIS. Ay've been tanking, and Ay guess it vas all my fault—all bad tangs dat happen to you. (*Pleadingly*) You try for not hate me, Anna. Ay'm crazy ole fool, dat's all.

ANNA. Who said I hated you?

CHRIS. Ay'm sorry for everytang Ay do wrong for you, Anna. Ay vant for you be happy all rest of your life for make up! It make you happy marry dat Irish fallar, Ay vant it, too.

ANNA. (*dully*) Well, there ain't no chance. But I'm glad you think different about it, anyway.

CHRIS. (*supplicatingly*) And you tank—maybe—you forgive me sometime?

ANNA. (*with a wan smile*) I'll forgive you right now.

CHRIS. (*seizing her hand and kissing it—brokenly*) Anna lilla! Anna lilla!

ANNA. (*touched but a bit embarrassed*) Don't bawl about it. There ain't nothing to forgive, anyway. It ain't your

fault, and it ain't mine, and it ain't his neither. We're all poor nuts, and things happen, and we yust get mixed in wrong, that's all.

CHRIS. (*eagerly*) You say right tang, Anna, py golly! It ain't nobody's fault! (*Shaking his fist*) It's dat ole davil, sea!

ANNA. (*with an exasperated laugh*) Gee, won't you ever can that stuff? (CHRIS *relapses into injured silence. After a pause* ANNA *continues curiously*) You said a minute ago you'd fixed something up—about me. What was it?

CHRIS. (*after a hesitating pause*) Ay'm shipping avay on sea again, Anna.

ANNA. (*astounded*) You're—what?

CHRIS. Ay sign on steamer sail tomorrow. Ay gat my ole yob—bo'sun. (ANNA *stares at him. As he goes on, a bitter smile comes over her face*) Ay tank dat's best tang for you. Ay only bring you bad luck, Ay tank. Ay make your mo'der's life sorry. Ay don't vant make yours dat way, but Ay do yust same. Dat ole davil, sea, she make me Yonah man ain't no good for nobody. And Ay tank now it ain't no use fight with sea. No man dat live going to beat her, py yingo!

ANNA. (*with a laugh of helpless bitterness*) So that's how you've fixed me, is it?

CHRIS. Yes, Ay tank if dat ole davil gat me back she leave you alone den.

ANNA. (*bitterly*) But, for Gawd's sake, don't you see you're doing the same thing you've always done? Don't you see——? (*But she sees the look of obsessed stubbornness on her father's face and gives it up helplessly*) But what's the use of talking? You ain't right, that's what. I'll never blame

you for nothing no more. But how you could figure out that was fixing me——!

CHRIS. Dat ain't all. Ay gat dem fallars in steamship office to pay you all money coming to me every month vhile Ay'm avay.

ANNA. (*with a hard laugh*) Thanks. But I guess I won't be hard up for no small change.

CHRIS. (*hurt—humbly*) It ain't much, Ay know, but it's plenty for keep you so you never gat go back——

ANNA. (*shortly*) Shut up, will you? We'll talk about it later, see?

CHRIS. (*after a pause—ingratiatingly*) You like Ay go ashore look for dat Irish fallar, Anna?

ANNA. (*angrily*) Not much! Think I want to drag him back?

CHRIS. (*after a pause—uncomfortably*) Py golly, dat booze don't go vell. Give me fever, Ay tank. Ay feel hot like hell. (*He takes off his coat and lets it drop on the floor. There is a loud thud*).

ANNA. (*with a start*) What you got in your pocket, for Pete's sake—a ton of lead? (*She reaches down, takes the coat and pulls out a revolver—looks from it to him in amazement*) A gun? What were you doing with this?

CHRIS. (*sheepishly*) Ay forget. Ain't nothing. Ain't loaded, anyvay.

ANNA. (*breaking it open to make sure—then closing it again—looking at him suspiciously*) That ain't telling me why you got it?

CHRIS. Ay'm ole fool. Ay got it when Ay go ashore first. Ay tank den it's all fault of dat Irish fallar.

ANNA. (*with a shudder*) Say, you're crazier than I thought. I never dreamt you'd go that far.

CHRIS. (*quickly*) Ay don't. Ay gat better sense right avay. Ay don't never buy bullets even. It ain't his fault, Ay know.

ANNA. (*still suspicious of him*) Well, I'll take care of this for a while, loaded or not. (*She puts it in the drawer of table and closes the drawer*).

CHRIS. (*placatingly*) Throw it overboard if you vant. Ay don't care. (*Then after a pause*) Py golly, Ay tank Ay go lie down. Ay feel sick. (ANNA *takes a magazine from the table.* CHRIS *hesitates by her chair*) Ve talk again before Ay go, yes?

ANNA. (*dully*) Where's this ship going to?

CHRIS. Cape Town. Dat's in South Africa. She's British steamer called Londonderry. (*He stands hesitatingly—finally blurts out*) Anna—you forgive me sure?

ANNA. (*wearily*) Sure I do. You ain't to blame. You're yust—what you are—like me.

CHRIS. (*pleadingly*) Den—you lat me kiss you again once?

ANNA. (*raising her face—forcing a wan smile*) Sure. No hard feelings.

CHRIS. (*kisses her brokenly*) Anna lilla! Ay—— (*He fights for words to express himself, but finds none—miserably —with a sob*) Ay can't say it. Good-night, Anna.

ANNA. Good-night. (*He picks up the can of beer and goes slowly into the room on left, his shoulders bowed, his head sunk forward dejectedly. He closes the door after him.* ANNA *turns over the pages of the magazine, trying desperately to banish her thoughts by looking at the pictures. This fails to*

distract her, and flinging the magazine back on the table, she springs to her feet and walks about the cabin distractedly, clenching and unclenching her hands. She speaks aloud to herself in a tense, trembling voice) Gawd, I can't stand this much longer! What am I waiting for anyway?—like a damn fool! (*She laughs helplessly, then checks herself abruptly, as she hears the sound of heavy footsteps on the deck outside. She appears to recognize these and her face lights up with joy. She gasps*) Mat! (*A strange terror seems suddenly to seize her. She rushes to the table, takes the revolver out of drawer and crouches down in the corner, left, behind the cupboard. A moment later the door is flung open and* MAT BURKE *appears in the doorway. He is in bad shape—his clothes torn and dirty, covered with sawdust as if he had been grovelling or sleeping on barroom floors. There is a red bruise on his forehead over one of his eyes, another over one cheekbone, his knuckles are skinned and raw—plain evidence of the fighting he has been through on his "bat." His eyes are bloodshot and heavy-lidded, his face has a bloated look. But beyond these appearances—the results of heavy drinking—there is an expression in his eyes of wild mental turmoil, of impotent animal rage baffled by its own abject misery*).

BURKE. (*peers blinkingly about the cabin—hoarsely*) Let you not be hiding from me, whoever's here—though 'tis well you know I'd have a right to come back and murder you. (*He stops to listen. Hearing no sound, he closes the door behind him and comes forward to the table. He throws himself into the rocking-chair—despondently*) There's no one here, I'm thinking, and 'tis a great fool I am to be coming. (*With a sort of dumb, uncomprehending anguish*) Yerra, Mat Burke, 'tis

a great jackass you've become and what's got into you at all, at all? She's gone out of this long ago, I'm telling you, and you'll never see her face again. (ANNA *stands up, hesitating, struggling between joy and fear.* BURKE'S *eyes fall on* ANNA'S *bag. He leans over to examine it*) What's this? (*Joyfully*) It's hers. She's not gone! But where is she? Ashore? (*Darkly*) What would she be doing ashore on this rotten night? (*His face suddenly convulsed with grief and rage*) 'Tis that, is it? Oh, God's curse on her! (*Raging*) I'll wait 'till she comes and choke her dirty life out. (ANNA *starts, her face grows hard. She steps into the room, the revolver in her right hand by her side*).

ANNA. (*in a cold, hard tone*) What are you doing here?

BURKE. (*wheeling about with a terrified gasp*) Glory be to God! (*They remain motionless and silent for a moment, holding each other's eyes*).

ANNA. (*in the same hard voice*) Well, can't you talk?

BURKE. (*trying to fall into an easy, careless tone*) You've a year's growth scared out of me, coming at me so sudden and me thinking I was alone.

ANNA. You've got your nerve butting in here without knocking or nothing. What d'you want?

BURKE. (*airily*) Oh, nothing much. I was wanting to have a last word with you, that's all. (*He moves a step toward her*).

ANNA. (*sharply—raising the revolver in her hand*) Careful now! Don't try getting too close. I heard what you said you'd do to me.

BURKE. (*noticing the revolver for the first time*) Is it murdering me you'd be now, God forgive you? (*Then with a*

contemptuous laugh) Or is it thinking I'd be frightened by that old tin whistle? (*He walks straight for her*).

ANNA. (*wildly*) Look out, I tell you!

BURKE. (*who has come so close that the revolver is almost touching his chest*) Let you shoot, then! (*Then with sudden wild grief*) Let you shoot, I'm saying, and be done with it! Let you end me with a shot and I'll be thanking you, for it's a rotten dog's life I've lived the past two days since I've known what you are, 'til I'm after wishing I was never born at all!

ANNA. (*overcome—letting the revolver drop to the floor, as if her fingers had no strength to hold it—hysterically*) What d'you want coming here? Why don't you beat it? Go on! (*She passes him and sinks down in the rocking-chair*).

BURKE. (*following her—mournfully*) 'Tis right you'd be asking why did I come. (*Then angrily*) 'Tis because 'tis a great weak fool of the world I am, and me tormented with the wickedness you'd told of yourself, and drinking oceans of booze that'd make me forget. Forget? Divil a word I'd forget, and your face grinning always in front of my eyes, awake or asleep, 'til I do be thinking a madhouse is the proper place for me.

ANNA. (*glancing at his hands and face—scornfully*) You look like you ought to be put away some place. Wonder you wasn't pulled in. You been scrapping, too, ain't you?

BURKE. I have—with every scut would take off his coat to me! (*Fiercely*) And each time I'd be hitting one a clout in the mug, it wasn't his face I'd be seeing at all, but yours, and me wanting to drive you a blow would knock you out of this world where I wouldn't be seeing or thinking more of you.

ANNA. (*her lips trembling pitifully*) Thanks!

BURKE. (*walking up and down—distractedly*) That's right,

make game of me! Oh, I'm a great coward surely, to be coming back to speak with you at all. You've a right to laugh at me.

ANNA. I ain't laughing at you, Mat.

BURKE. (*unheeding*) You to be what you are, and me to be Mat Burke, and me to be drove back to look at you again! 'Tis black shame is on me!

ANNA. (*resentfully*) Then get out. No one's holding you!

BURKE. (*bewilderedly*) And me to listen to that talk from a woman like you and be frightened to close her mouth with a slap! Oh, God help me, I'm a yellow coward for all men to spit at! (*Then furiously*) But I'll not be getting out of this 'till I've had me word. (*Raising his fist threateningly*) And let you look out how you'd drive me! (*Letting his fist fall helplessly*) Don't be angry now! I'm raving like a real lunatic, I'm thinking, and the sorrow you put on me has my brains drownded in grief. (*Suddenly bending down to her and grasping her arm intensely*) Tell me it's a lie, I'm saying! That's what I'm after coming to hear you say.

ANNA. (*dully*) A lie? What?

BURKE. (*with passionate entreaty*) All the badness you told me two days back. Sure it must be a lie! You was only making game of me, wasn't you? Tell me 'twas a lie, Anna, and I'll be saying prayers of thanks on my two knees to the Almighty God!

ANNA. (*terribly shaken—faintly*) I can't, Mat. (*As he turns away—imploringly*) Oh, Mat, won't you see that no matter what I was I ain't that any more? Why, listen! I packed up my bag this afternoon and went ashore. I'd been waiting here all alone for two days, thinking maybe you'd come back—thinking maybe you'd think over all I'd said—

and maybe—oh, I don't know what I was hoping! But I was afraid to even go out of the cabin for a second, honest—afraid you might come and not find me here. Then I gave up hope when you didn't show up and I went to the railroad station. I was going to New York. I was going back——

BURKE. (*hoarsely*) God's curse on you!

ANNA. Listen, Mat! You hadn't come, and I'd gave up hope. But—in the station—I couldn't go. I'd bought my ticket and everything. (*She takes the ticket from her dress and tries to hold it before his eyes*) But I got to thinking about you—and I couldn't take the train—I couldn't! So I come back here—to wait some more. Oh, Mat, don't you see I've changed? Can't you forgive what's dead and gone—and forget it?

BURKE. (*turning on her—overcome by rage again*) Forget, is it? I'll not forget 'til my dying day, I'm telling you, and me tormented with thoughts. (*In a frenzy*) Oh, I'm wishing I had wan of them fornenst me this minute and I'd beat him with my fists 'til he'd be a bloody corpse! I'm wishing the whole lot of them will roast in hell 'til the Judgment Day—and yourself along with them, for you're as bad as they are.

ANNA. (*shuddering*) Mat! (*Then after a pause—in a voice of dead, stony calm*) Well, you've had your say. Now you better beat it.

BURKE. (*starts slowly for the door—hesitates—then after a pause*) And what'll you be doing?

ANNA. What difference does it make to you?

BURKE. I'm asking you!

ANNA. (*in the same tone*) My bag's packed and I got my ticket. I'll go to New York tomorrow.

BURKE. (*helplessly*) You mean—you'll be doing the same again?

ANNA. (*stonily*) Yes.

BURKE. (*in anguish*) You'll not! Don't torment me with that talk! 'Tis a she-divil you are sent to drive me mad entirely!

ANNA. (*her voice breaking*) Oh, for Gawd's sake, Mat, leave me alone! Go away! Don't you see I'm licked? Why d'you want to keep on kicking me?

BURKE. (*indignantly*) And don't you deserve the worst I'd say, God forgive you?

ANNA. All right. Maybe I do. But don't rub it in. Why ain't you done what you said you was going to? Why ain't you got that ship was going to take you to the other side of the earth where you'd never see me again?

BURKE. I have.

ANNA. (*startled*) What—then you're going—honest?

BURKE. I signed on today at noon, drunk as I was—and she's sailing tomorrow.

ANNA. And where's she going to?

BURKE. Cape Town.

ANNA. (*the memory of having heard that name a little while before coming to her—with a start, confusedly*) Cape Town? Where's that? Far away?

BURKE. 'Tis at the end of Africa. That's far for you.

ANNA. (*forcing a laugh*) You're keeping your word all right, ain't you? (*After a slight pause—curiously*) What's the boat's name?

BURKE. The Londonderry.

ANNA. (*it suddenly comes to her that this is the same ship her father is sailing on*) The Londonderry! It's the same—

Oh, this is too much! (*With wild, ironical laughter*) Ha-ha-ha!

BURKE. What's up with you now?

ANNA. Ha-ha-ha! It's funny, funny! I'll die laughing!

BURKE. (*irritated*) Laughing at what?

ANNA. It's a secret. You'll know soon enough. It's funny. (*Controlling herself—after a pause—cynically*) What kind of a place is this Cape Town? Plenty of dames there, I suppose?

BURKE. To hell with them! That I may never see another woman to my dying hour!

ANNA. That's what you say now, but I'll bet by the time you get there you'll have forgot all about me and start in talking the same old bull you talked to me to the first one you meet.

BURKE. (*offended*) I'll not, then! God mend you, is it making me out to be the like of yourself you are, and you taking up with this one and that all the years of your life?

ANNA. (*angrily assertive*) Yes, that's yust what I do mean! You been doing the same thing all your life, picking up a new girl in every port. How're you any better than I was?

BURKE. (*thoroughly exasperated*) Is it no shame you have at all? I'm a fool to be wasting talk on you and you hardened in badness. I'll go out of this and lave you alone forever. (*He starts for the door—then stops to turn on her furiously*) And I suppose 'tis the same lies you told them all before that you told to me?

ANNA. (*indignantly*) That's a lie! I never did!

BURKE. (*miserably*) You'd be saying that, anyway.

ANNA. (*forcibly, with growing intensity*) Are you trying to accuse me—of being in love—really in love—with them?

BURKE. I'm thinking you were, surely.

ANNA. (*furiously, as if this were the last insult—advancing*

on him threateningly) You mutt, you! I've stood enough from you. Don't you dare. (*With scornful bitterness*) Love 'em! Oh, my Gawd! You damn thick-head! Love 'em? (*Savagely*) I hated 'em, I tell you! Hated 'em, hated 'em, hated 'em! And may Gawd strike me dead this minute and my mother, too, if she was alive, if I ain't telling you the honest truth!

BURKE. (*immensely pleased by her vehemence—a light beginning to break over his face—but still uncertain, torn between doubt and the desire to believe—helplessly*) If I could only be believing you now!

ANNA. (*distractedly*) Oh, what's the use? What's the use of me talking? What's the use of anything? (*Pleadingly*) Oh, Mat, you mustn't think that for a second! You mustn't! Think all the other bad about me you want to, and I won't kick, 'cause you've a right to. But don't think that! (*On the point of tears*) I couldn't bear it! It'd be just too much to know you was going away where I'd never see you again—thinking that about me!

BURKE. (*after an inward struggle—tensely—forcing out the words with difficulty*) If I was believing—that you'd never had love for any other man in the world but me—I could be forgetting the rest, maybe.

ANNA. (*with a cry of joy*) Mat!

BURKE. (*slowly*) If 'tis truth you're after telling, I'd have a right, maybe, to believe you'd changed—and that I'd changed you myself 'til the thing you'd been all your life wouldn't be you any more at all.

ANNA. (*hanging on his words—breathlessly*) Oh, Mat! That's what I been trying to tell you all along!

BURKE. (*simply*) For I've a power of strength in me to

lead men the way I want, and women, too, maybe, and I'm thinking I'd change you to a new woman entirely, so I'd never know, or you either, what kind of woman you'd been in the past at all.

ANNA. Yes, you could, Mat! I know you could!

BURKE. And I'm thinking 'twasn't your fault, maybe, but having that old ape for a father that left you to grow up alone, made you what you was. And if I could be believing 'tis only me you——

ANNA. (*distractedly*) You got to believe it, Mat! What can I do? I'll do anything, anything you want to prove I'm not lying!

BURKE. (*suddenly seems to have a solution. He feels in the pocket of his coat and grasps something—solemnly*) Would you be willing to swear an oath, now—a terrible, fearful oath would send your soul to the divils in hell if you was lying?

ANNA. (*eagerly*) Sure, I'll swear, Mat—on anything!

BURKE. (*takes a small, cheap old crucifix from his pocket and holds it up for her to see*) Will you swear on this?

ANNA. (*reaching out for it*) Yes. Sure I will. Give it to me.

BURKE. (*holding it away*) 'Tis a cross was given me by my mother, God rest her soul. (*He makes the sign of the cross mechanically*) I was a lad only, and she told me to keep it by me if I'd be waking or sleeping and never lose it, and it'd bring me luck. She died soon after. But I'm after keeping it with me from that day to this, and I'm telling you there's great power in it, and 'tis great bad luck it's saved me from and me roaming the seas, and I having it tied round my neck when my last ship sunk, and it bringing me safe to land when the

others went to their death. (*Very earnestly*) And I'm warning you now, if you'd swear an oath on this, 'tis my old woman herself will be looking down from Hivin above, and praying Almighty God and the Saints to put a great curse on you if she'd hear you swearing a lie!

ANNA. (*awed by his manner—superstitiously*) I wouldn't have the nerve—honest—if it was a lie. But it's the truth and I ain't scared to swear. Give it to me.

BURKE. (*handing it to her—almost frightenedly, as if he feared for her safety*) Be careful what you'd swear, I'm saying.

ANNA. (*holding the cross gingerly*) Well—what do you want me to swear? You say it.

BURKE. Swear I'm the only man in the world ivir you felt love for.

ANNA. (*Looking into his eyes steadily*) I swear it.

BURKE. And that you'll be forgetting from this day all the badness you've done and never do the like of it again.

ANNA. (*forcibly*) I swear it! I swear it by God!

BURKE. And may the blackest curse of God strike you if you're lying. Say it now!

ANNA. And may the blackest curse of God strike me if I'm lying!

BURKE. (*with a stupendous sigh*) Oh, glory be to God, I'm after believing you now! (*He takes the cross from her hand, his face beaming with joy, and puts it back in his pocket. He puts his arm about her waist and is about to kiss her when he stops, appalled by some terrible doubt*).

ANNA. (*alarmed*) What's the matter with you?

BURKE. (*with sudden fierce questioning*) Is it Catholic ye are?

ANNA. (*confused*) No. Why?

BURKE. (*filled with a sort of bewildered foreboding*) Oh, God, help me! (*With a dark glance of suspicion at her*) There's some divil's trickery in it, to be swearing an oath on a Catholic cross and you wan of the others.

ANNA. (*distractedly*) Oh, Mat, don't you believe me?

BURKE. (*miserably*) If it isn't a Catholic you are——

ANNA. I ain't nothing. What's the difference? Didn't you hear me swear?

BURKE. (*passionately*) Oh, I'd a right to stay away from you—but I couldn't! I was loving you in spite of it all and wanting to be with you, God forgive me, no matter what you are. I'd go mad if I'd not have you! I'd be killing the world—— (*He seizes her in his arms and kisses her fiercely*).

ANNA. (*with a gasp of joy*) Mat!

BURKE. (*suddenly holding her away from him and staring into her eyes as if to probe into her soul—slowly*) If your oath is no proper oath at all, I'll have to be taking your naked word for it and have you anyway, I'm thinking—I'm needing you that bad!

ANNA. (*hurt—reproachfully*) Mat! I swore, didn't I?

BURKE. (*defiantly, as if challenging fate*) Oath or no oath, 'tis no matter. We'll be wedded in the morning, with the help of God. (*Still more defiantly*) We'll be happy now, the two of us, in spite of the divil! (*He crushes her to him and kisses her again. The door on the left is pushed open and* CHRIS *appears in the doorway. He stands blinking at them. At first the old expression of hatred of* BURKE *comes into his eyes instinctively.*

Then a look of resignation and relief takes its place. His face lights up with a sudden happy thought. He turns back into the bedroom—reappears immediately with the tin can of beer in his hand—grinning).

CHRIS. Ve have drink on this, py golly! (*They break away from each other with startled exclamations*).

BURKE. (*explosively*) God stiffen it! (*He takes a step toward* CHRIS *threateningly*).

ANNA. (*happily—to her father*) That's the way to talk! (*With a laugh*) And say, it's about time for you and Mat to kiss and make up. You're going to be shipmates on the Londonderry, did you know it?

BURKE. (*astounded*) Shipmates—— Has himself——

CHRIS. (*equally astounded*) Ay vas bo'sun on her.

BURKE. The divil! (*Then angrily*) You'd be going back to sea and leaving her alone, would you?

ANNA. (*quickly*) It's all right, Mat. That's where he belongs, and I want him to go. You got to go, too; we'll need the money. (*With a laugh, as she gets the glasses*) And as for me being alone, that runs in the family, and I'll get used to it. (*Pouring out their glasses*) I'll get a little house somewhere and I'll make a regular place for you two to come back to,—wait and see. And now you drink up and be friends.

BURKE. (*happily—but still a bit resentful against the old man*) Sure! (*Clinking his glass against* CHRIS') Here's luck to you! (*He drinks*).

CHRIS. (*subdued—his face melancholy*) Skoal. (*He drinks*).

BURKE. (*to* ANNA, *with a wink*) You'll not be lonesome long. I'll see to that, with the help of God. 'Tis himself here

will be having a grandchild to ride on his foot, I'm telling you!

ANNA. (*turning away in embarrassment*) Quit the kidding now. (*She picks up her bag and goes into the room on left. As soon as she is gone* BURKE *relapses into an attitude of gloomy thought.* CHRIS *stares at his beer absent-mindedly. Finally* BURKE *turns on him*).

BURKE. Is it any religion at all you have, you and your Anna?

CHRIS. (*surprised*) Vhy yes. Ve vas Lutheran in ole country.

BURKE. (*horrified*) Luthers, is it? (*Then with a grim resignation, slowly, aloud to himself*) Well, I'm damned then surely. Yerra, what's the difference? 'Tis the will of God, anyway.

CHRIS. (*moodily preoccupied with his own thoughts—speaks with somber premonition as* ANNA *re-enters from the left*) It's funny. It's queer, yes—you and me shipping on same boat dat vay. It ain't right. Ay don't know—it's dat funny vay ole davil sea do her vorst dirty tricks, yes. It's so. (*He gets up and goes back and, opening the door, stares out into the darkness*).

BURKE. (*nodding his head in gloomy acquiescence—with a great sigh*) I'm fearing maybe you have the right of it for once, divil take you.

ANNA. (*forcing a laugh*) Gee, Mat, you ain't agreeing with him, are you? (*She comes forward and puts her arm about his shoulder—with a determined gayety*) Aw say, what's the matter? Cut out the gloom. We're all fixed now, ain't we, me and you? (*Pours out more beer into his glass and fills one for herself—slaps him on the back*) Come on! Here's to the sea, no matter what! Be a game sport and drink to that! Come

on! (*She gulps down her glass.* BURKE *banishes his superstitious premonitions with a defiant jerk of his head, grins up at her, and drinks to her toast*).

CHRIS. (*looking out into the night—lost in his somber preoccupation—shakes his head and mutters*) Fog, fog, fog, all bloody time. You can't see vhere you vas going, no. Only dat ole davil, sea—she knows! (*The two stare at him. From the harbor comes the muffled, mournful wail of steamers' whistles*).

(*The Curtain Falls*)

ALL GOD'S CHILLUN GOT WINGS

(1923)

CHARACTERS

JIM HARRIS
MRS. HARRIS, *his mother*
HATTIE, *his sister*
ELLA DOWNEY
SHORTY
JOE
MICKEY
Whites and Negroes.

ACT I

SCENE I: A corner in lower New York. Years ago. End of an afternoon in Spring.

SCENE II: The same. Nine years later. End of an evening in Spring.

SCENE III: The same. Five years later. A night in Spring.

SCENE IV: The street before a church in the same ward. A morning some weeks later.

ACT II

SCENE I: A flat in the same ward. A morning two years later.

SCENE II: The same. At twilight some months later.

SCENE III: The same. A night some months later.

ALL GOD'S CHILLUN GOT WINGS

ACT ONE

ALL GOD'S CHILLUN GOT WINGS

ACT ONE

Scene One

A corner in lower New York, at the edge of a colored district. Three narrow streets converge. A triangular building in the rear, red brick, four-storied, its ground floor a grocery. Four-story tenements stretch away down the skyline of the two streets. The fire escapes are crowded with people. In the street leading left, the faces are all white; in the street leading right, all black. It is hot Spring. On the sidewalk are eight children, four boys and four girls. Two of each sex are white, two black. They are playing marbles. One of the black boys is JIM HARRIS. *The little blonde girl, her complexion rose and white, who sits behind his elbow and holds his marbles is* ELLA DOWNEY. *She is eight. They play the game with concentrated attention for a while. People pass, black and white, the Negroes frankly participants in the spirit of Spring, the whites laughing constrainedly, awkward in natural emotion. Their words are lost. One hears only their laughter. It expresses the difference in race. There are street noises—the clattering roar of the Elevated, the puff of its locomotives, the ruminative lazy sound of a horse-car, the hooves of its team clacking on the cobbles. From the street of the whites a high-pitched, nasal tenor sings the chorus of "Only a Bird in a Gilded Cage." On the street of the blacks a Negro strikes up the chorus of: "I*

Guess I'll Have to Telegraph My Baby." As this singing ends, there is laughter, distinctive in quality, from both streets. Then silence. The light in the street begins to grow brilliant with the glow of the setting sun. The game of marbles goes on.

WHITE GIRL. (*tugging at the elbow of her brother*) Come on, Mickey!

HER BROTHER. (*roughly*) Aw, gwan, youse!

WHITE GIRL. Aw right, den. You kin git a lickin' if you wanter. (*Gets up to move off*).

HER BROTHER. Aw, git off de eart'!

WHITE GIRL. De old woman'll be madder'n hell!

HER BROTHER. (*worried now*) I'm comin', ain't I? Hold your horses.

BLACK GIRL. (*to a black boy*) Come on, you Joe. We gwine git frailed too, you don't hurry.

JOE. Go long!

MICKEY. Bust up de game, huh? I gotta run! (*Jumps to his feet*).

OTHER WHITE BOY. Me, too! (*Jumps up*).

OTHER BLACK GIRL. Lawdy, it's late!

JOE. Me for grub!

MICKEY. (*to* JIM HARRIS) You's de winner, Jim Crow. Yeh gotta play tomorrer.

JIM. (*readily*) Sure t'ing, Mick. Come one, come all! (*He laughs*).

OTHER WHITE BOY. Me, too! I gotta git back at yuh.

JIM—Aw right, Shorty.

LITTLE GIRLS. Hurry! Come on, come on! (*The six start off together. Then they notice that* JIM *and* ELLA *are hesitating, standing awkwardly and shyly together. They turn to mock*).

JOE. Look at dat Jim Crow! Land sakes, he got a gal! (*He laughs. They all laugh*).

JIM. (*ashamed*) Ne'er mind, you Chocolate!

MICKEY. Look at de two softies, will yeh! Mush! Mush! (*He and the two other boys take this up*).

LITTLE GIRLS. (*pointing their fingers at* ELLA) Shame! Shame! Everybody knows your name! Painty Face! Painty Face!

ELLA. (*hanging her head*) Shut up!

LITTLE WHITE GIRL. He's been carrying her books!

COLORED GIRL. Can't you find nuffin' better'n him, Ella? Look at de big feet he got! (*She laughs. They all laugh.* JIM *puts one foot on top of the other, looking at* ELLA).

ELLA. Mind yer own business, see! (*She strides toward them angrily. They jump up and dance in an ecstasy, screaming and laughing*).

ALL. Found yeh out! Found yeh out!

MICKEY. Mush-head! Jim Crow de Sissy! Stuck on Painty Face!

JOE. Will Painty Face let you hold her doll, boy?

SHORTY. Sissy! Softy! (ELLA *suddenly begins to cry. At this they all howl*).

ALL. Cry-baby! Cry-baby! Look at her! Painty Face!

JIM. (*suddenly rushing at them, with clenched fists, furiously*) Shut yo' moufs! I kin lick de hull of you! (*They all run away, laughing, shouting, and jeering, quite triumphant now that they have made him, too, lose his temper. He comes back to* ELLA, *and stands beside her sheepishly, stepping on one foot after the other. Suddenly he blurts out*): Don't bawl no more. I done chased 'em.

ELLA. (*comforted, politely*) T'anks.

JIM. (*swelling out*) It was a cinch. I kin wipe up de street wid any one of dem. (*He stretches out his arms, trying to bulge out his biceps*). Feel dat muscle!

ELLA. (*does so gingerly—then with admiration*) My!

JIM. (*protectingly*) You mustn't never be scared when I'm hanging round, Painty Face.

ELLA. Don't call me that, Jim—please!

JIM. (*contritely*) I didn't mean nuffin'. I didn't know you'd mind.

ELLA. I do—more'n anything.

JIM. You oughtn't to mind. Dey's jealous, dat's what.

ELLA. Jealous? Of what?

JIM. (*pointing to her face*) Of dat. Red 'n' white. It's purty.

ELLA. I hate it!

JIM. It's purty. Yes, it's—it's purty. It's—outa sight!

ELLA. I hate it. I wish I was black like you.

JIM. (*sort of shrinking*) No you don't. Dey'd call you Crow, den—or Chocolate—or Smoke.

ELLA. I wouldn't mind.

JIM. (*somberly*) Dey'd call you nigger sometimes, too.

ELLA. I wouldn't mind.

JIM. (*humbly*) You wouldn't mind?

ELLA. No, I wouldn't mind. (*An awkward pause*).

JIM. (*suddenly*) You know what, Ella? Since I been tuckin' yo' books to school and back, I been drinkin' lots o' chalk 'n' water tree times a day. Dat Tom, de barber, he tole me dat make me white, if I drink enough. (*Pleadingly*) Does I look whiter?

ELLA. (*comfortingly*) Yes—maybe—a little bit——

JIM. (*trying a careless tone*) Reckon dat Tom's a liar, an' de joke's on me! Dat chalk only makes me feel kinder sick inside.

ELLA. (*wonderingly*) Why do you want to be white?

JIM. Because—just because—I lak dat better.

ELLA. I wouldn't. I like black. Let's you and me swap. I'd like to be black. (*Clapping her hands*) Gee, that'd be fun, if we only could!

JIM. (*hesitatingly*) Yes—maybe——

ELLA. Then they'd call me Crow, and you'd be Painty Face!

JIM. They wouldn't never dast call you nigger, you bet! I'd kill 'em! (*A long pause. Finally she takes his hand shyly. They both keep looking as far away from each other as possible*).

ELLA. I like you.

JIM. I like you.

ELLA. Do you want to be my feller?

JIM. Yes.

ELLA. Then I'm your girl.

JIM. Yes. (*Then grandly*) You kin bet none o' de gang gwine call you Painty Face from dis out! I lam' 'em good! (*The sun has set. Twilight has fallen on the street. An organ grinder comes up to the corner and plays "Annie Rooney." They stand hand-in-hand and listen. He goes away. It is growing dark*).

ELLA. (*suddenly*) Golly, it's late! I'll git a lickin'!

JIM. Me, too.

ELLA. I won't mind it much.

JIM. Me nuther.

ELLA. See you going to school tomorrow?

JIM. Sure.

ELLA. I gotta skip now.

JIM. Me, too.

ELLA. I like you, Jim.

JIM. I like you.

ELLA. Don't forget.

JIM. Don't you.

ELLA. Good-by.

JIM. So long. (*They run away from each other—then stop abruptly, and turn as at a signal*).

ELLA. Don't forget.

JIM. I won't, you bet!

ELLA. Here! (*She kisses her hand at him, then runs off in frantic embarrassment*).

JIM. (*overcome*) Gee! (*Then he turns and darts away, as*

(*The Curtain Falls*)

ACT ONE

Scene Two

The same corner. Nine years have passed. It is again late Spring at a time in the evening which immediately follows the hour of Scene One. *Nothing has changed much. One street is still all white, the other all black. The fire escapes are laden with drooping human beings. The grocery store is still at the corner. The street noises are now more rhythmically mechanical, electricity having taken the place of horse and steam. People pass, white and black. They laugh as in* Scene One. *From the street of the whites the high-pitched nasal tenor sings: "Gee, I Wish That I Had a Girl," and the Negro replies with "All I Got Was Sympathy." The singing is followed again by laughter from both streets. Then silence. The dusk grows darker. With a spluttering flare the arc-lamp at the corner is lit and sheds a pale glare over the street. Two young roughs slouch up to the corner, as tough in manner as they can make themselves. One is the* shorty *of* Scene One; *the other the Negro,* joe. *They stand loafing. A boy of seventeen or so passes by, escorting a girl of about the same age. Both are dressed in their best, the boy in black with stiff collar, the girl in white.*

shorty. (*scornfully*) Hully cripes! Pipe who's here. (*To the girl, sneeringly*) Wha's matter, Liz? Don't yer recernize yer old fr'ens?

girl. (*frightenedly*) Hello, Shorty.

shorty. Why de glad rags? Goin' to graduation? (*He tries*

to obstruct their way, but, edging away from him, they turn and run).

JOE. Har-har! Look at dem scoot, will you! (SHORTY *grins with satisfaction*).

SHORTY. (*looking down other street*) Here comes Mickey.

JOE. He won de semi-final last night easy?

SHORTY. Knocked de bloke out in de thoid.

JOE. Dat boy's suah a-comin'! He'll be de champeen yit.

SHORTY. (*judicially*) Got a good chanct—if he leaves de broads alone. Dat's where he's wide open. (MICKEY *comes in from the left. He is dressed loudly, a straw hat with a gaudy band cocked over one cauliflower ear. He has acquired a typical "pug's" face, with the added viciousness of a natural bully. One of his eyes is puffed, almost closed, as a result of his battle the night before. He swaggers up*).

BOTH. Hello, Mickey.

MICKEY. Hello.

JOE. Hear you knocked him col'.

MICKEY. Sure. I knocked his block off. (*Changing the subject*). Say. Seen 'em goin' past to de graduation racket?

SHORTY. (*with a wink*) Why? You int'rested?

JOE. (*chuckling*) Mickey's gwine roun' git a good conduct medal.

MICKEY. Sure. Dey kin pin it on de seat o' me pants. (*They laugh*) Listen. Seen Ella Downey goin'?

SHORTY. Painty Face? No, she ain't been along.

MICKEY. (*with authority*) Can dat name, see! Want a bunch o' fives in yer kisser? Den nix! She's me goil, understan'?

JOE. (*venturing to joke*) Which one? Yo' number ten?

MICKEY. (*flattered*) Sure. De real K. O. one.

SHORTY. (*pointing right—sneeringly*) Gee! Pipe Jim Crow all dolled up for de racket.

JOE. (*with disgusted resentment*) You mean tell me dat nigger's graduatin'?

SHORTY. Ask him. (JIM HARRIS *comes in. He is dressed in black, stiff white collar, etc.—a quiet-mannered Negro boy with a queerly-baffled, sensitive face*).

JIM. (*pleasantly*) Hello, fellows. (*They grunt in reply, looking over him scornfully*).

JOE. (*staring resentfully*) Is you graduatin' tonight?

JIM. Yes.

JOE. (*spitting disgustedly*) Fo' Gawd's sake! You *is* gittin' high-falutin'!

JIM. (*smiling deprecatingly*) This is my second try. I didn't pass last year.

JOE. What de hell does it git you, huh? Whatever is you gwine do wid it now you gits it? Live lazy on yo' ol' woman?

JIM. (*assertively*) I'm going to study and become a lawyer.

JOE. (*with a snort*) Fo' Chris' sake, nigger!

JIM. (*fiercely*) Don't you call me that—not before them!

JOE. (*pugnaciously*) Does you deny you's a nigger? I shows you——

MICKEY. (*gives them both a push—truculently*) Cut it out, see! I'm runnin' dis corner. (*Turning to* JIM *insultingly*) Say you! Painty Face's gittin' her ticket tonight, ain't she?

JIM. You mean Ella——

MICKEY. Painty Face Downey, dat's who I mean! I don't have to be perlite wit' her. She's me goil!

JIM. (*glumly*) Yes, she's graduating.

SHORTY. (*winks at* MICKEY) Smart, huh?

MICKEY. (*winks back—meaningly*) Willin' to loin, take it from me! (JIM *stands tensely as if a struggle were going on in him*).

JIM. (*finally blurts out*) I want to speak to you, Mickey—alone.

MICKEY. (*surprised—insultingly*) Aw, what de hell——!

JIM. (*excitedly*) It's important, I tell you!

MICKEY. Huh? (*Stares at him inquisitively—then motions the others back carelessly and follows* JIM *down front*).

SHORTY. Some noive!

JOE. (*vengefully*) I gits dat Jim alone, you wait!

MICKEY. Well, spill de big news. I ain't got all night. I got a date.

JIM. With—Ella?

MICKEY. What's dat to you?

JIM. (*the words tumbling out*) What—I wanted to say! I know—I've heard—all the stories—what you've been doing around the ward—with other girls—it's none of my business, with them—but she—Ella—it's different—she's not that kind——

MICKEY. (*insultingly*) Who told yuh so, huh?

JIM. (*draws back his fist threateningly*) Don't you dare—! (MICKEY *is so paralyzed by this effrontery that he actually steps back*).

MICKEY. Say, cut de comedy! (*Beginning to feel insulted*) Listen, you Jim Crow! Ain't you wise I could give yuh one poke dat'd knock yuh into next week?

JIM. I'm only asking you to act square, Mickey.

MICKEY. What's it to yuh? Why, yuh lousy goat, she wouldn't spit on yuh even! She hates de sight of a coon.

JIM. (*in agony*) I—I know—but once she didn't mind—we were kids together——

MICKEY. Aw, ferget dat! Dis is *now!*

JIM. And I'm still her friend always—even if she don't like colored people——

MICKEY. *Coons,* why don't yuh say it right! De trouble wit' you is yuh're gittin' stuck up, dat's what! Stay where yeh belong, see! Yer old man made coin at de truckin' game and yuh're tryin' to buy yerself white—graduatin' and law, for Christ sake! Yuh're gittin' yerself in Dutch wit' everyone in de ward—and it ain't cause yer a coon neider. Don't de gang all train wit' Joe dere and lots of others? But yuh're tryin' to buy white and it won't git yuh no place, see!

JIM. (*trembling*) Some day—I'll show you——

MICKEY. (*turning away*) Aw, gwan!

JIM. D'you think I'd change—be you—your dirty white——!

MICKEY. (*whirling about*) What's dat?

JIM. (*with hysterical vehemence*) You act square with her—or I'll show you up—I'll report you—I'll write to the papers—the sporting writers—I'll let them know how white you are!

MICKEY. (*infuriated*) Yuh damn nigger, I'll bust yer jaw in! (*Assuming his ring pose he weaves toward* JIM, *his face set in a cruel scowl.* JIM *waits helplessly but with a certain dignity*).

SHORTY. Cheese it! A couple bulls! And here's de Downey skoit comin', too.

MICKEY. I'll get yuh de next time! (ELLA DOWNEY *enters from the right. She is seventeen, still has the same rose and white complexion, is pretty but with a rather repelling bold air about her*).

ELLA. (*smiles with pleasure when she sees* MICKEY) Hello, Mick. Am I late? Say, I'm so glad you won last night. (*She glances from one to the other as she feels something in the air*) Hello! What's up?

MICKEY. Dis boob. (*He indicates* JIM *scornfully*).

JIM. (*diffidently*) Hello, Ella.

ELLA. (*shortly, turning away*) Hello. (*Then to* MICKEY) Come on, Mick. Walk down with me. I got to hurry.

JIM. (*blurts out*) Wait—just a second. (*Painfully*) Ella, do you hate—colored people?

MICKEY. Aw, shut up!

JIM. Please answer.

ELLA. (*forcing a laugh*) Say! What is this—another exam?

JIM. (*doggedly*) Please answer.

ELLA. (*irritably*) Of course I don't! Haven't I been brought up alongside— Why, some of my oldest—the girls I've been to public school the longest with——

JIM. Do you hate me, Ella?

ELLA. (*confusedly and more irritably*) Say, is he drunk? Why should I? I don't hate anyone.

JIM. Then why haven't you ever hardly spoken to me—for years?

ELLA. (*resentfully*) What would I speak about? You and me've got nothing in common any more.

JIM. (*desperately*) Maybe not any more—but—right on this corner—do you remember once——?

ELLA. I don't remember nothing! (*Angrily*) Say! What's got into you to be butting into my business all of a sudden like this? Because you finally managed to graduate, has it gone to your head?

JIM. No, I—only want to help you, Ella.

ELLA. Of all the nerve! You're certainly forgetting your place! Who's asking you for help, I'd like to know? Shut up and stop bothering me!

JIM. (*insistently*) If you ever need a friend—a true friend——

ELLA. I've got lots of friends among my own—kind, I can tell you. (*Exasperatedly*) You make me sick! Go to the devil! (*She flounces off. The three men laugh.* MICKEY *follows her.* JIM *is stricken. He goes and sinks down limply on a box in front of the grocery store*).

SHORTY. I'm going to shoot a drink. Come on, Joe, and I'll blow yuh.

JOE. (*who has never ceased to follow every move of* JIM's *with angry, resentful eyes*) Go long. I'se gwine stay here a secon'. I got a lil' argyment. (*He points to* JIM).

SHORTY. Suit yerself. Do a good job. See yuh later. (*He goes, whistling*).

JOE. (*stands for a while glaring at* JIM, *his fierce little eyes peering out of his black face. Then he spits on his hands aggressively and strides up to the oblivious* JIM. *He stands in front of him, gradually working himself into a fury at the other's seeming indifference to his words*) Listen to me, nigger: I got a heap to whisper in yo' ear! Who is you, anyhow? Who does you think you is? Don't yo' old man and mine work on de docks togidder befo' yo' old man gits his own truckin' business? Yo' ol' man swallers his nickels, my ol' man buys him beer wid dem and swallers dat—dat's the on'y diff'rence. Don't you 'n' me drag up togidder?

JIM. (*dully*) I'm your friend, Joe.

JOE. No, you isn't! I ain't no fren o' yourn! I don't even know who you is! What's all dis schoolin' you doin'? What's all dis dressin' up and graduatin' an' sayin' you gwine study be a lawyer? What's all dis fakin' an' pretendin' and swellin' out grand an' talkin' soft and perlite? What's all dis denyin' you's a nigger—an' wid de white boys listenin' to you say it! Is you aimin' to buy white wid yo' ol' man's dough like Mickey say? What is you? (*In a rage at the other's silence*) You don't talk? Den I takes it out o' yo' hide! (*He grabs* JIM *by the throat with one hand and draws the other fist back*) Tell me befo' I wrecks yo' face in! Is you a nigger or isn't you? (*Shaking him*) Is you a nigger, Nigger? Nigger, is you a nigger?

JIM. (*looking into his eyes—quietly*) Yes. I'm a nigger. We're both niggers. (*They look at each other for a moment.* JOE'S *rage vanishes. He slumps onto a box beside* JIM'S. *He offers him a cigarette.* JIM *takes it.* JOE *scratches a match and lights both their cigarettes*).

JOE. (*after a puff, with full satisfaction*) Man, why didn't you 'splain dat in de fust place?

JIM. We're both niggers. (*The same hand-organ man of* SCENE ONE *comes to the corner. He plays the chorus of "Bon-bon Buddie The Chocolate Drop." They both stare straight ahead listening. Then the organ man goes away. A silence.* JOE *gets to his feet*).

JOE. I'll go get me a cold beer. (*He starts to move off—then turns*) Time you was graduatin', ain't it? (*He goes.* JIM *remains sitting on his box staring straight before him as*

(*The Curtain Falls*)

ACT ONE

Scene Three

The same corner five years later. Nothing has changed much. It is a night in Spring. The arc-lamp discovers faces with a favorless cruelty. The street noises are the same but more intermittent and dulled with a quality of fatigue. Two people pass, one black and one white. They are tired. They both yawn, but neither laughs. There is no laughter from the two streets. From the street of the whites the tenor, more nasal than ever and a bit drunken, wails in high barber-shop falsetto the last half of the chorus of "When I Lost You." The Negro voice, a bit maudlin in turn, replies with the last half of "Waitin' for the Robert E. Lee." Silence. SHORTY *enters. He looks tougher than ever, the typical gangster. He stands waiting, singing a bit drunkenly, peering down the street.*

SHORTY. (*indignantly*) Yuh bum! Ain't yuh ever comin'? (*He begins to sing: "And sewed up in her yeller kimona, She had a blue-barreled forty-five gun, For to get her man Who'd done her wrong." Then he comments scornfully*) Not her, dough! No gat for her. She ain't got de noive. A little sugar. Dat'll fix her. (ELLA *enters. She is dressed poorly, her face is pale and hollow-eyed, her voice cold and tired*).

SHORTY. Yuh got de message?

ELLA. Here I am.

SHORTY. How yuh been?

ELLA. All right. (*A pause. He looks at her puzzledly*).

SHORTY. (*a bit embarrassedly*) Well, I s'pose yuh'd like me to give yuh some dope on Mickey, huh?

ELLA. No.

SHORTY. Mean to say yuh don't wanter know where he is or what he's doin'?

ELLA. No.

SHORTY. Since when?

ELLA. A long time.

SHORTY. (*after a pause—with a rat-like viciousness*) Between you'n me, kid, you'll get even soon—you'n all de odder dames he's tossed. I'm on de inside. I've watched him trainin'. His next scrap, watch it! He'll go! It won't be de odder guy. It'll be all youse dames he's kidded—and de ones what's kidded him. Youse'll all be in de odder guy's corner. He won't need no odder seconds. Youse'll trow water on him, and sponge his face, and take de kinks out of his socker—and Mickey'll catch it on de button—and he won't be able to take it no more—'cause all your weight—you and de odders—'ll be behind dat punch. Ha ha! (*He laughs an evil laugh*) And Mickey'll go —down to his knees first—(*He sinks to his knees in the attitude of a groggy boxer*).

ELLA. I'd like to see him on his knees!

SHORTY. And den—flat on his pan—dead to de world—de boidies singin' in de trees—ten—out! (*He suits his action to the words, sinking flat on the pavement, then rises and laughs the same evil laugh*).

ELLA. He's been out—for me—a long time. (*A pause*) Why did you send for me?

SHORTY. He sent me.

ELLA. Why?

SHORTY. To slip you dis wad o' dough. (*He reluctantly takes a roll of bills from his pocket and holds it out to her*).

ELLA. (*looks at the money indifferently*) What for?

SHORTY. For you.

ELLA. No.

SHORTY. For de kid den.

ELLA. The kid's dead. He took diphtheria.

SHORTY. Hell yuh say! When?

ELLA. A long time.

SHORTY. Why didn't you write Mickey——?

ELLA. Why should I? He'd only be glad.

SHORTY. (*after a pause*) Well—it's better.

ELLA. Yes.

SHORTY. You made up wit yer family?

ELLA. No chance.

SHORTY. Livin' alone?

ELLA. In Brooklyn.

SHORTY. Workin'?

ELLA. In a factory.

SHORTY. You're a sucker. There's lots of softer snaps fer you, kid——

ELLA. I know what you mean. No.

SHORTY. Don't yuh wanter step out no more—have fun—live?

ELLA. I'm through.

SHORTY. (*mockingly*) Jump in de river, huh? T'ink it over, baby. I kin start yuh right in my stable. No one'll bodder yuh den. I got influence.

ELLA. (*without emphasis*) You're a dirty dog. Why doesn't someone kill you?

SHORTY. Is dat so! What're you? They say you been travelin' round with Jim Crow.

ELLA. He's been my only friend.

SHORTY. A nigger!

ELLA. The only white man in the world! Kind and white. You're all black—black to the heart.

SHORTY. Nigger-lover! (*He throws the money in her face. It falls to the street*) Listen, you! Mickey says he's off of yuh for keeps. Dis is de finish! Dat's what he sent me to tell you. (*Glances at her searchingly—a pause*) Yuh won't make no trouble?

ELLA. Why should I? He's free. The kid's dead. I'm free. No hard feelings—only—I'll be there in spirit at his next fight, tell him! I'll take your tip—the other corner—second the punch—nine—ten—out! He's free! That's all. (*She grins horribly at* SHORTY) Go away, Shorty.

SHORTY. (*looking at her and shaking his head—maudlinly*) Groggy! Groggy! We're all groggy! Gluttons for punishment! Me for a drink. So long. (*He goes. A Salvation Army band comes toward the corner. They are playing and singing "Till We Meet at Jesus' Feet." They reach the end as they enter and stop before* ELLA. THE CAPTAIN *steps forward*).

CAPTAIN. Sister——

ELLA. (*picks up the money and drops it in his hat—mockingly*) Here. Go save yourself. Leave me alone.

A WOMAN SALVATIONIST. Sister——

ELLA. Never mind that. I'm not in your line—yet. (*As they hesitate, wonderingly*) I want to be alone. (*To the thud of the big drum they march off.* ELLA *sits down on a box, her hands hanging at her sides. Presently* JIM HARRIS *comes in.*

He has grown into a quietly-dressed, studious-looking Negro with an intelligent yet queerly-baffled face).

JIM. (*with a joyous but bewildered cry*) Ella! I just saw Shorty——

ELLA. (*smiling at him with frank affection*) He had a message from Mickey.

JIM. (*sadly*) Ah!

ELLA. (*pointing to the box behind her*) Sit down. (*He does so. A pause—then she says indifferently*) It's finished. I'm free, Jim.

JIM. (*wearily*) We're never free—except to do what we have to do.

ELLA. What are you getting gloomy about all of a sudden?

JIM. I've got the report from the school. I've flunked again.

ELLA. Poor Jim.

JIM. Don't pity me. I'd like to kick myself all over the block. Five years—and I'm still plugging away where I ought to have been at the end of two.

ELLA. Why don't you give it up?

JIM. No!

ELLA. After all, what's being a lawyer?

JIM. A lot—to me—what it means. (*Intensely*) Why, if I was a Member of the Bar right now, Ella, I believe I'd almost have the courage to——

ELLA. What?

JIM. Nothing. (*After a pause—gropingly*) I can't explain —just—but it hurts like fire. It brands me in my pride. I swear I know more'n any member of my class. I ought to, I study harder. I work like the devil. It's all in my head—all fine and correct to a T. Then when I'm called on—I stand up—all

the white faces looking at me—and I can feel their eyes—I hear my own voice sounding funny, trembling—and all of a sudden it's all gone in my head—there's nothing remembered—and I hear myself stuttering—and give up—sit down—— They don't laugh, hardly ever. They're kind. They're good people. (*In a frenzy*) They're considerate, damn them! But I feel branded!

ELLA. Poor Jim.

JIM. (*going on painfully*) And it's the same thing in the written exams. For weeks before I study all night. I can't sleep anyway. I learn it all, I see it, I understand it. Then they give me the paper in the exam room. I look it over, I know each answer—perfectly. I take up my pen. On all sides are white men starting to write. They're so sure—even the ones that I know know nothing. But I know it all—but I can't remember any more—it fades—it goes—it's gone. There's a blank in my head—stupidity—I sit like a fool fighting to remember a little bit here, a little bit there—not enough to pass—not enough for anything—when I know it all!

ELLA. (*compassionately*) Jim. It isn't worth it. You don't need to——

JIM. I need it more than anyone ever needed anything. I need it to live.

ELLA. What'll it prove?

JIM. Nothing at all much—but everything to me.

ELLA. You're so much better than they are in every other way.

JIM. (*looking up at her*) Then—you understand?

ELLA. Of course. (*Affectionately*) Don't I know how fine you've been to me! You've been the only one in the world

who's stood by me—the only understanding person—and all after the rotten way I used to treat you.

JIM. But before that—way back so high—you treated me good. (*He smiles*).

ELLA. You've been white to me, Jim. (*She takes his hand*).

JIM. White—to you!

ELLA. Yes.

JIM. All love is white. I've always loved you. (*This with the deepest humility*).

ELLA. Even now—after all that's happened!

JIM. Always.

ELLA. I like you, Jim—better than anyone else in the world.

JIM. That's more than enough, more than I ever hoped for. (*The organ grinder comes to the corner. He plays the chorus of "Annie Laurie." They sit listening, hand in hand*) Would you ever want to marry me, Ella?

ELLA. Yes, Jim.

JIM. (*as if this quick consent alarmed him*) No, no, don't answer now. Wait! Turn it over in your mind! Think what it means to you! Consider it—over and over again! I'm in no hurry, Ella. I can wait months—years——

ELLA. I'm alone. I've got to be helped. I've got to help someone—or it's the end—one end or another.

JIM. (*eagerly*) Oh, I'll help—I know I can help—I'll give my life to help you—that's what I've been living for——

ELLA. But can I help you? Can I help you?

JIM. Yes! Yes! We'll go abroad where a man is a man—where it don't make that difference—where people are kind and wise to see the soul under skins. I don't ask you to love me—I don't dare to hope nothing like that! I don't want nothing—

only to wait—to know you like me—to be near you—to keep harm away—to make up for the past—to never let you suffer any more—to serve you—to lie at your feet like a dog that loves you—to kneel by your bed like a nurse that watches over you sleeping—to preserve and protect and shield you from evil and sorrow—to give my life and my blood and all the strength that's in me to give you peace and joy—to become your slave!—yes, be your slave—your black slave that adores you as sacred! (*He has sunk to his knees. In a frenzy of self-abnegation, as he says the last words he beats his head on the flagstones*).

ELLA. (*overcome and alarmed*) Jim! Jim! You're crazy! I want to help you, Jim—I want to help——

(*The Curtain Falls*)

ACT ONE

Scene Four

Some weeks or so later. A street in the same ward in front of an old brick church. The church sets back from the sidewalk in a yard enclosed by a rusty iron railing with a gate at center. On each side of this yard are tenements. The buildings have a stern, forbidding look. All the shades on the windows are drawn down, giving an effect of staring, brutal eyes that pry callously at human beings without acknowledging them. Even the two tall, narrow church windows on either side of the arched door are blanked with dull green shades. It is a bright sunny morning. The district is unusually still, as if it were waiting, holding its breath.

From the street of the blacks to the right a Negro tenor sings in a voice of shadowy richness—the first stanza with a contented, childlike melancholy—

Sometimes I feel like a mourning dove,
Sometimes I feel like a mourning dove,
Sometimes I feel like a mourning dove,
I feel like a mourning dove.
Feel like a mourning dove.

The second with a dreamy, boyish exultance—

Sometimes I feel like an eagle in the air,
Sometimes I feel like an eagle in the air,
Sometimes I feel like an eagle in the air,

I feel like an eagle in the air.
Feel like an eagle in the air.

The third with a brooding, earthbound sorrow—

Sometimes I wish that I'd never been born,
Sometimes I wish that I'd never been born,
Sometimes I wish that I'd never been born,
I wish that I'd never been born.
Wish that I'd never been born.

As the music dies down there is a pause of waiting stillness. This is broken by one startling, metallic clang of the church-bell. As if it were a signal, people—men, women, children—pour from the two tenements, whites from the tenement to the left, blacks from the one to the right. They hurry to form into two racial lines on each side of the gate, rigid and unyielding, staring across at each other with bitter hostile eyes. The halves of the big church door swing open and JIM *and* ELLA *step out from the darkness within into the sunlight. The doors slam behind them like wooden lips of an idol that has spat them out.* JIM *is dressed in black.* ELLA *in white, both with extreme plainness. They stand in the sunlight, shrinking and confused. All the hostile eyes are now concentrated on them. They become aware of the two lines through which they must pass; they hesitate and tremble; then stand there staring back at the people as fixed and immovable as they are. The organ grinder comes in from the right. He plays the chorus of "Old Black Joe." As he finishes the bell of the church clangs one more single stroke, insistently dismissing.*

JIM. (*as if the sound had awakened him from a trance, reaches out and takes her hand*) Come. Time we got to the

steamer. Time we sailed away over the sea. Come, Honey! (*She tries to answer but her lips tremble; she cannot take her eyes off the eyes of the people; she is unable to move. He sees this and, keeping the same tone of profound, affectionate kindness, he points upward in the sky, and gradually persuades her eyes to look up*) Look up, Honey! See the sun! Feel his warm eye lookin' down! Feel how kind he looks! Feel his blessing deep in your heart, your bones! Look up, Honey! (*Her eyes are fixed on the sky now. Her face is calm. She tries to smile bravely back at the sun. Now he pulls her by the hand, urging her gently to walk with him down through the yard and gate, through the lines of people. He is maintaining an attitude to support them through the ordeal only by a terrible effort, which manifests itself in the hysteric quality of ecstasy which breaks into his voice*) And look at the sky! Ain't it kind and blue! Blue for hope. Don't they say blue's for hope? Hope! That's for us, Honey. All those blessings in the sky! What's it the Bible says? Falls on just and unjust alike? No, that's the sweet rain. Pshaw, what am I saying? All mixed up. There's no unjust about it. We're all the same—equally just—under the sky—under the sun—under God—sailing over the sea—to the other side of the world—the side where Christ was born—the kind side that takes count of the soul—over the sea—the sea's blue, too——. Let's not be late—let's get that steamer! (*They have reached the curb now, passed the lines of people. She is looking up to the sky with an expression of trancelike calm and peace. He is on the verge of collapse, his face twitching, his eyes staring. He calls hoarsely*): Taxi! Where is he? **Taxi!**

(*The Curtain Falls*)

ALL GOD'S CHILLUN GOT WINGS

ACT TWO

ACT TWO

Scene One

Two years later. A flat of the better sort in the Negro district near the corner of Act One. This is the parlor. Its furniture is a queer clash. The old pieces are cheaply ornate, naïvely, childishly gaudy—the new pieces give evidence of a taste that is diametrically opposed, severe to the point of somberness. On one wall, in a heavy gold frame, is a colored photograph—the portrait of an elderly Negro with an able, shrewd face but dressed in outlandish lodge regalia, a get-up adorned with medals, sashes, a cocked hat with frills—the whole effect as absurd to contemplate as one of Napoleon's Marshals in full uniform. In the left corner, where a window lights it effectively, is a Negro primitive mask from the Congo—a grotesque face, inspiring obscure, dim connotations in one's mind, but beautifully done, conceived in a true religious spirit. In this room, however, the mask acquires an arbitrary accentuation. It dominates by a diabolical quality that contrast imposes upon it.

There are two windows on the left looking out in the street. In the rear, a door to the hall of the building. In the right, a doorway with red and gold portières leading into the bedroom and the rest of the flat. Everything is cleaned and polished. The dark brown wall paper is new, the brilliantly figured carpet also. There is a round mahogany table at center. In a rocking chair by the table MRS. HARRIS *is sitting. She is a mild-looking, gray-haired Negress of sixty-five, dressed in an old-fashioned Sunday-best dress. Walking about the room nervously is* HAT-

TIE, *her daughter,* JIM'S *sister, a woman of about thirty with a high-strung, defiant face—an intelligent head showing both power and courage. She is dressed severely, mannishly.*

It is a fine morning in Spring. Sunshine comes through the windows at the left.

MRS. HARRIS. Time dey was here, ain't it?

HATTIE. (*impatiently*) Yes.

MRS. H. (*worriedly*) You ain't gwine ter kick up a fuss, is you—like you done wid Jim befo' de weddin'?

HATTIE. No. What's done is done.

MRS. H. We mustn't let her see we hold it agin' her—de bad dat happened to her wid dat no-count fighter.

HATTIE. I certainly never give that a thought. It's what she's done to Jim—making him run away and give up his fight——!

MRS. H. Jim loves her a powerful lot, must be.

HATTIE. (*after a pause—bitterly*) I wonder if she loves Jim!

MRS. H. She must, too. Yes, she must, too. Don't you forget dat it was hard for her—mighty, mighty hard—harder for de white dan for de black!

HATTIE. (*indignantly*) Why should it be?

MRS. H. (*shaking her head*) I ain't talkin' of shoulds. It's too late for shoulds. Dey's o'ny one should. (*Solemnly*) De white and de black shouldn't mix dat close. Dere's one road where de white goes on alone; dere's anudder road where de black goes on alone——

HATTIE. Yes, if they'd only leave us alone!

MRS. H. Dey leaves your Pa alone. He comes to de top till he's got his own business, lots o' money in de bank, he owns

a building even befo' he die. (*She looks up proudly at the picture.* HATTIE *sighs impatiently—then her mother goes on*) Dey leaves me alone. I bears four children into dis worl', two dies, two lives, I helps you two grow up fine an' healthy and eddicated wid schoolin' and money fo' yo' comfort——

HATTIE. (*impatiently*) Ma!

MRS. H. I does de duty God set for me in dis worl'. Dey leaves me alone. (HATTIE *goes to the window to hide her exasperation. The mother broods for a minute—then goes on*) The worl' done change. Dey ain't no satisfaction wid nuffin' no more.

HATTIE. Oh! (*Then after a pause*) They'll be here any minute now.

MRS. H. Why didn't you go meet 'em at de dock like I axed you?

HATTIE. I couldn't. My face and Jim's among those hundreds of white faces—— (*With a harsh laugh*) It would give her too much advantage!

MRS. H. (*impatiently*) Don't talk dat way! What makes you so proud? (*Then after a pause—sadly*) Hattie.

HATTIE. (*turning*) Yes, Ma.

MRS. H. I want to see Jim again—my only boy—but—all de same I'd ruther he stayed away. He say in his letter he's happy, she's happy, dey likes it dere, de folks don't think nuffin' but what's natural at seeing 'em married. Why don't dey stay?

HATTIE. (*vehemently*) No! They were cowards to run away. If they believe in what they've done, then let them face it out, live it out here, be strong enough to conquer all prejudice!

MRS. H. Strong? Dey ain't many strong. Dey ain't many happy neider. Dey was happy ovah yondah.

HATTIE. We don't deserve happiness till we've fought the fight of our race and won it! (*In the pause that follows there is a ring from back in the flat*) It's the door bell! You go, Ma. I—I—I'd rather not. (*Her mother looks at her rebukingly and goes out agitatedly through the portières.* HATTIE *waits, nervously walking about, trying to compose herself. There is a long pause. Finally the portières are parted and* JIM *enters. He looks much older, graver, worried*).

JIM. Hattie!

HATTIE. Jim! (*They embrace with great affection*).

JIM. It's great to see you again! You're looking fine.

HATTIE. (*looking at him searchingly*) You look well, too—thinner maybe—and tired. (*Then as she sees him frowning*) But where's Ella?

JIM. With Ma. (*Apologetically*) She sort of—broke down—when we came in. The trip wore her out.

HATTIE. (*coldly*) I see.

JIM. Oh, it's nothing serious. Nerves. She needs a rest.

HATTIE. Wasn't living in France restful?

JIM. Yes, but—too lonely—especially for her.

HATTIE. (*resentfully*) Why? Didn't the people there want to associate——?

JIM. (*quickly*) Oh, no indeedy, they didn't think anything of that. (*After a pause*) But—she did. For the first year it was all right. Ella liked everything a lot. She went out with French folks and got so she could talk it a little—and I learned it—a little. We were having a right nice time. I never thought then we'd ever want to come back here.

HATTIE. (*frowning*) But—what happened to change you?

JIM. (*after a pause—haltingly*) Well—you see—the first year—she and I were living around—like friends—like a brother and sister—like you and I might.

HATTIE. (*her face becoming more and more drawn and tense*) You mean—then——? (*She shudders—then after a pause*) She loves you, Jim?

JIM. If I didn't know that I'd have to jump in the river.

HATTIE. Are you sure she loves you?

JIM. Isn't that why she's suffering?

HATTIE. (*letting her breath escape through her clenched teeth*) Ah!

JIM. (*suddenly springs up and shouts almost hysterically*) Why d'you ask me all those damn questions? Are you trying to make trouble between us?

HATTIE. (*controlling herself—quietly*) No, Jim.

JIM. (*after a pause—contritely*) I'm sorry, Hattie. I'm kind of on edge today. (*He sinks down on his chair—then goes on as if something forced him to speak*) After that we got to living housed in. Ella didn't want to see nobody, she said just the two of us was enough. I was happy then—and I really guess she was happy, too—in a way—for a while. (*Again a pause*) But she never did get to wanting to go out any place again. She got to saying she felt she'd be sure to run into someone she knew—from over here. So I moved us out to the country where no tourist ever comes—but it didn't make any difference to her. She got to avoiding the French folks the same as if they were Americans and I couldn't get it out of her mind. She lived in the house and got paler and paler, and more and more nervous and searey, always imagining

things—until I got to imagining things, too. I got to feeling blue. Got to sneering at myself that I wasn't any better than a quitter because I sneaked away right after getting married, didn't face nothing, gave up trying to become a Member of the Bar—and I got to suspecting Ella must feel that way about me, too—that I wasn't a *real man!*

HATTIE. (*indignantly*) She couldn't!

JIM. (*with hostility*) You don't need to tell me! All this was only in my own mind. We never quarreled a single bit. We never said a harsh word. We were as close to each other as could be. We were all there was in the world to each other. We were alone together! (*A pause*) Well, one day I got so I couldn't stand it. I could see she couldn't stand it. So I just up and said: Ella, we've got to have a plain talk, look everything straight in the face, hide nothing, come out with the exact truth of the way we feel.

HATTIE. And you decided to come back!

JIM. Yes. We decided the reason we felt sort of ashamed was we'd acted like cowards. We'd run away from the thing —and taken it with us. We decided to come back and face it and live it down in ourselves, and prove to ourselves we were strong in our love—and then, and that way only, by being brave we'd free ourselves, and gain confidence, and be really free inside and able then to go anywhere and live in peace and equality with ourselves and the world without any guilty uncomfortable feeling coming up to rile us. (*He has talked himself now into a state of happy confidence*).

HATTIE. (*bending over and kissing him*) Good for you! I admire you so much, Jim! I admire both of you! And are you

going to begin studying right away and get admitted to the Bar?

JIM. You bet I am!

HATTIE. You must, Jim! Our race needs men like you to come to the front and help—— (*As voices are heard approaching she stops, stiffens, and her face grows cold*).

JIM. (*noticing this—warningly*) Remember Ella's been sick! (*Losing control—threateningly*) You be nice to her, you hear! (MRS. HARRIS *enters, showing* ELLA *the way. The colored woman is plainly worried and perplexed.* ELLA *is pale, with a strange, haunted expression in her eyes. She runs to* JIM *as to a refuge, clutching his hands in both of hers, looking from* MRS. HARRIS *to* HATTIE *with a frightened defiance*).

MRS. H. Dere he is, child, big's life! She was afraid we'd done kidnapped you away, Jim.

JIM. (*patting her hand*) This place ought to be familiar, Ella. Don't you remember playing here with us sometimes as a kid?

ELLA. (*queerly—with a frown of effort*) I remember playing marbles one night—but that was on the street.

JIM. Don't you remember Hattie?

HATTIE. (*coming forward with a forced smile*) It was a long time ago—but I remember Ella. (*She holds out her hand*).

ELLA. (*taking it—looking at* HATTIE *with the same queer defiance*) I remember. But you've changed so much.

HATTIE. (*stirred to hostility by* ELLA'S *manner—condescendingly*) Yes, I've grown older, naturally. (*Then in a tone which, as if in spite of herself, becomes bragging*) I've worked so hard. First I went away to college, you know—then I took up

post-graduate study—when suddenly I decided I'd accomplish more good if I gave up learning and took up teaching. (*She suddenly checks herself, ashamed, and stung by* ELLA's *indifference*) But this sounds like stupid boasting. I don't mean that. I was only explaining——

ELLA. (*indifferently*) I didn't know you'd been to school so long. (*A pause*) Where are you teaching? In a colored school, I suppose. (*There is an indifferent superiority in her words that is maddening to* HATTIE).

HATTIE. (*controlling herself*) Yes. A private school endowed by some wealthy members of our race.

ELLA. (*suddenly—even eagerly*) Then you must have taken lots of examinations and managed to pass them, didn't you?

HATTIE. (*biting her lips*) I always passed with honors!

ELLA. Yes, we both graduated from the same High School, didn't we? That was dead easy for me. Why I hardly even looked at a book. But Jim says it was awfully hard for him. He failed one year, remember? (*She turns and smiles at* JIM *—a tolerant, superior smile but one full of genuine love.* HATTIE *is outraged, but* JIM *smiles*).

JIM. Yes, it was hard for me, Honey.

ELLA. And the law school examinations Jim hardly ever could pass at all. Could you? (*She laughs lovingly*).

HATTIE. (*harshly*) Yes, he could! He can! He'll pass them now—if you'll give him a chance!

JIM. (*angrily*) Hattie!

MRS. HARRIS. Hold yo' fool tongue!

HATTIE. (*sullenly*) I'm sorry. (ELLA *has shrunk back against* JIM. *She regards* HATTIE *with a sort of wondering hatred. Then she looks away about the room. Suddenly her*

eyes fasten on the primitive mask and she gives a stifled scream).

JIM. What's the matter, Honey?

ELLA. (*pointing*) That! For God's sake, what is it?

HATTIE. (*scornfully*) It's a Congo mask. (*She goes and picks it up*) I'll take it away if you wish. I thought you'd like it. It was my wedding present to Jim.

ELLA. What is it?

HATTIE. It's a mask which used to be worn in religious ceremonies by my people in Africa. But, aside from that, it's beautifully made, a work of Art by a real artist—as real in his way as your Michael Angelo. (*Forces* ELLA *to take it*) Here. Just notice the workmanship.

ELLA. (*defiantly*) I'm not scared of it if you're not. (*Looking at it with disgust*) Beautiful? Well, some people certainly have queer notions! It looks ugly to me and stupid—like a kid's game—making faces! (*She slaps it contemptuously*) Pooh! You needn't look hard at me. I'll give you the laugh. (*She goes to put it back on the stand*).

JIM. Maybe, if it disturbs you, we better put it in some other room.

ELLA. (*defiantly aggressive*) No. I want it here where I can give it the laugh! (*She sets it there again—then turns suddenly on* HATTIE *with aggressive determination*) Jim's not going to take any more examinations! I won't let him!

HATTIE. (*bursting forth*) Jim! Do you hear that? There's white justice!—their fear for their superiority!——

ELLA. (*with a terrified pleading*) Make her go away, Jim!

JIM. (*losing control—furiously to his sister*) Either you leave here—or we will!

MRS. H. (*weeping—throws her arms around* HATTIE) Let's go, chile! Let's go!

HATTIE. (*calmly now*) Yes, Ma. All right. (*They go through the portières. As soon as they are gone,* JIM *suddenly collapses into a chair and hides his head in his hands.* ELLA *stands beside him for a moment. She stares distractedly about her, at the portrait, at the mask, at the furniture, at* JIM. *She seems fighting to escape from some weight on her mind. She throws this off and, completely her old self for the moment, kneels by* JIM *and pats his shoulder*).

ELLA. (*with kindness and love*) Don't, Jim! Don't cry, please! You don't suppose I really meant that about the examinations, do you? Why, of course, I didn't mean a word! I couldn't mean it! I want you to take the examinations! I want you to pass! I want you to be a lawyer! I want you to be the best lawyer in the country! I want you to show 'em—all the dirty sneaking, gossiping liars that talk behind our backs—what a man I married. I want the whole world to know you're the whitest of the white! I want you to climb and climb—and step on 'em, stamp right on their mean faces! I love you, Jim. You know that!

JIM. (*calm again—happily*) I hope so, Honey—and I'll make myself worthy.

HATTIE. (*appears in the doorway—quietly*) We're going now, Jim.

ELLA. No. Don't go.

HATTIE. We were going to, anyway. This is your house —Mother's gift to you, Jim.

JIM. (*astonished*) But I can't accept—— Where are you going?

HATTIE. We've got a nice flat in the Bronx—(*with bitter pride*) in the heart of the Black Belt—the Congo—among our own people!

JIM. (*angrily*) You're crazy—I'll see Ma—— (*He goes out.* HATTIE *and* ELLA *stare at each other with scorn and hatred for a moment, then* HATTIE *goes.* ELLA *remains kneeling for a moment by the chair, her eyes dazed and strange as she looks about her. Then she gets to her feet and stands before the portrait of* JIM'S *father—with a sneer*).

ELLA. It's his Old Man—all dolled up like a circus horse! Well, they can't help it. It's in the blood, I suppose. They're ignorant, that's all there is to it. (*She moves to the mask—forcing a mocking tone*) Hello, sport! Who d'you think you're scaring? Not me! I'll give you the laugh. He won't pass, you wait and see. Not in a thousand years! (*She goes to the window and looks down at the street and mutters*) All black! Every one of them! (*Then with sudden excitement*) No, there's one. Why, it's Shorty! (*She throws the window open and calls*) Shorty! Shorty! Hello, Shorty! (*She leans out and waves—then stops, remains there for a moment looking down, then shrinks back on the floor suddenly as if she wanted to hide—her whole face in an anguish*) Say! Say! I wonder? —No, he didn't hear you. Yes, he did, too! He must have! I yelled so loud you could hear me in Jersey! No, what are you talking about? How would he hear with all the kids yelling down there? He never heard a word, I tell you! He did, too! He didn't want to hear you! He didn't want to let anyone know he knew you! Why don't you acknowledge it? What are you lying about? I'm not! Why shouldn't he? Where does he come in to—for God's sake, who is Shorty, anyway? A

pimp! Yes, and a dope-peddler, too! D'you mean to say he'd have the nerve to hear me call him and then deliberately——? Yes, I mean to say it! I do say it! And it's true, and you know it, and you might as well be honest for a change and admit it! He heard you but he didn't want to hear you! He doesn't want to know you any more. No, not even him! He's afraid it'd get him in wrong with the old gang. Why? You know well enough! Because you married a—a—a—well, I won't say it, but you know without my mentioning names! ELLA *springs to her feet in horror and shakes off her obsession with a frantic effort*) Stop! (*Then whimpering like a frightened child*) Jim! Jim! Jim! Where are you? I want you, Jim! (*She runs out of the room* as

(*The Curtain Falls*)

ACT TWO

Scene Two

The same. Six months later. It is evening. The walls of the room appear shrunken in, the ceiling lowered, so that the furniture, the portrait, the mask look unnaturally large and domineering. JIM *is seated at the table studying, law books piled by his elbows. He is keeping his attention concentrated only by a driving physical effort which gives his face the expression of a runner's near the tape. His forehead shines with perspiration. He mutters one sentence from Blackstone over and over again, tapping his forehead with his fist in time to the rhythm he gives the stale words. But, in spite of himself, his attention wanders, his eyes have an uneasy, hunted look, he starts at every sound in the house or from the street. Finally, he remains rigid, Blackstone forgotten, his eyes fixed on the portières with tense grief. Then he groans, slams the book shut, goes to the window and throws it open and sinks down beside it, his arms on the sill, his head resting wearily on his arms, staring out into the night, the pale glare from the arc-lamp on the corner throwing his face into relief. The portières on the right are parted and* HATTIE *comes in.*

HATTIE. (*not seeing him at the table*) Jim! (*Discovering him*) Oh, there you are. What're you doing?

JIM. (*turning to her*) Resting. Cooling my head. (*Forcing a smile*) These law books certainly are a sweating proposition! (*Then, anxiously*) How is she?

HATTIE. She's asleep now. I felt it was safe to leave her for a minute. (*After a pause*) What did the doctor tell you, Jim?

JIM. The same old thing. She must have rest, he says, her mind needs rest—— (*Bitterly*) But he can't tell me any prescription for that rest—leastways not any that'd work.

HATTIE. (*after a pause*) I think you ought to leave her, Jim—or let her leave you—for a while, anyway.

JIM. (*angrily*) You're like the doctor. Everything's so simple and easy. Do this and that happens. Only it don't. Life isn't simple like that—not in this case, anyway—no, it isn't simple a bit. (*After a pause*) I can't leave her. She can't leave me. And there's a million little reasons combining to make one big reason why we can't. (*A pause*) For her sake—if it'd do her good—I'd go—I'd leave—I'd do anything —because I love her. I'd kill myself even—jump out of this window this second—I've thought it over, too—but that'd only make matters worse for her. I'm all she's got in the world! Yes, that isn't bragging or fooling myself. I know that for a fact! Don't you know that's true? (*There is a pleading for the certainty he claims*).

HATTIE. Yes, I know she loves you, Jim. I know that now.

JIM. (*simply*) Then we've got to stick together to the end, haven't we, whatever comes—and hope and pray for the best? (*A pause—then hopefully*) I think maybe this is the crisis in her mind. Once she settles this in herself, she's won to the other side. And me—once I become a Member of the Bar—then I win, too! We're both free—by our own fighting down our own weakness! We're both really, truly free! Then we can be happy with ourselves here or anywhere. She'll be

proud then! Yes, she's told me again and again, she says she'll be actually proud!

HATTIE. (*turning away to conceal her emotion*) Yes, I'm sure—but you mustn't study too hard, Jim! You mustn't study too awfully hard!

JIM. (*gets up and goes to the table and sits down wearily*) Yes, I know. Oh, I'll pass easily. I haven't got any scarey feeling about that any more. And I'm doing two years' work in one here alone. That's better than schools, eh?

HATTIE. (*doubtfully*) It's wonderful, Jim.

JIM. (*his spirit evaporating*) If I can only hold out! It's hard! I'm worn out. I don't sleep. I get to thinking and thinking. My head aches and burns like fire with thinking. Round and round my thoughts go chasing like crazy chickens hopping and flapping before the wind. It gets me crazy mad —'cause I can't stop!

HATTIE. (*watching him for a while and seeming to force herself to speak*) The doctor didn't tell you all, Jim.

JIM. (*dully*) What's that?

HATTIE. He told me you're liable to break down too, if you don't take care of yourself.

JIM. (*abjectly weary*) Let 'er come! I don't care what happens to me. Maybe if I get sick she'll get well. There's only so much bad luck allowed to one family, maybe. (*He forces a wan smile*).

HATTIE. (*hastily*) Don't give in to that idea, for the Lord's sake!

JIM. I'm tired—and blue—that's all.

HATTIE. (*after another long pause*) I've got to tell you something else, Jim.

JIM. (*dully*) What?

HATTIE. The doctor said Ella's liable to be sick like this a very long time.

JIM. He told me that too—that it'd be a long time before she got back her normal strength. Well, I suppose that's got to be expected.

HATTIE. (*slowly*) He didn't mean convalescing—what he told me. (*A long pause*).

JIM. (*evasively*) I'm going to get other doctors in to see Ella—specialists. This one's a damn fool.

HATTIE. Be sensible, Jim. You'll have to face the truth—sooner or later.

JIM. (*irritably*) I know the truth about Ella better'n any doctor.

HATTIE. (*persuasively*) She'd get better so much sooner if you'd send her away to some nice sanitarium——

JIM. No! She'd die of shame there!

HATTIE. At least until after you've taken your examinations——

JIM. To hell with me!

HATTIE. Six months. That wouldn't be long to be parted.

JIM. What are you trying to do—separate us? (*He gets to his feet—furiously*) Go on out! Go on out!

HATTIE. (*calmly*) No, I won't. (*Sharply*) There's something that's got to be said to you and I'm the only one with the courage—— (*Intensely*) Tell me, Jim, have you heard her raving when she's out of her mind?

JIM. (*with a shudder*) No!

HATTIE. You're lying, Jim. You must have—if you don't stop your ears—and the doctor says she may develop a violent

mania, dangerous for you—get worse and worse until—Jim, you'll go crazy too—living this way. Today she raved on about "Black! Black!" and cried because she said her skin was turning black—that you had poisoned her——

JIM. (*in anguish*) That's only when she's out of her mind.

HATTIE. And then she suddenly called me a dirty nigger.

JIM. No! She never said that ever! She never would!

HATTIE. She did—and kept on and on! (*A tense pause*) She'll be saying that to you soon.

JIM. (*torturedly*) She don't mean it! She isn't responsible for what she's saying!

HATTIE. I know she isn't—yet she is just the same. It's deep down in her or it wouldn't come out.

JIM. Deep down in her people—not deep in her.

HATTIE. I can't make such distinctions. The race in me, deep in me, can't stand it. I can't play nurse to her any more, Jim,—not even for your sake. I'm afraid—afraid of myself—afraid sometime I'll kill her dead to set you free! (*She loses control and begins to cry*).

JIM. (*after a long pause—somberly*) Yes, I guess you'd better stay away from here. Good-by.

HATTIE. Who'll you get to nurse her, Jim,—a white woman?

JIM. Ella'd die of shame. No, I'll nurse her myself.

HATTIE. And give up your studies?

JIM. I can do both.

HATTIE. You can't! You'll get sick yourself! Why, you look terrible even as it is—and it's only beginning!

JIM. I can do anything for her! I'm all she's got in the world! I've got to prove I can be all to her! I've got to

prove worthy! I've got to prove she can be proud of me! I've got to prove I'm the whitest of the white!

HATTIE. (*stung by this last—with rebellious bitterness*) Is that the ambition she's given you? Oh, you soft, weak-minded fool, you traitor to your race! And the thanks you'll get—to be called a dirty nigger—to hear her cursing you because she can never have a child because it'll be born black——!

JIM. (*in a frenzy*) Stop!

HATTIE. I'll say what must be said even though you kill me, Jim. Send her to an asylum before you both have to be sent to one together.

JIM. (*with a sudden wild laugh*) Do you think you're threatening me with something dreadful now? Why, I'd like that. Sure, I'd like that! Maybe she'd like it better, too. Maybe we'd both find it all simple then—like you think it is now. Yes. (*He laughs again*).

HATTIE. (*frightenedly*) Jim!

JIM. Together! You can't scare me even with hell fire if you say she and I go together. It's heaven then for me! (*With sudden savagery*) You go out of here! All you've ever been aiming to do is to separate us so we can't be together!

HATTIE. I've done what I did for your own good.

JIM. I have no own good. I only got a good together with her. I'm all she's got in the world! Let her call me nigger! Let her call me the whitest of the white! I'm all she's got in the world, ain't I? She's all I've got! You with your fool talk of the black race and the white race! Where does the human race get a chance to come in? I suppose that's simple for you. You lock it up in asylums and throw away the key!

(*With fresh violence*) Go along! There isn't going to be no more people coming in here to separate—excepting the doctor. I'm going to lock the door and it's going to stay locked, you hear? Go along, now!

HATTIE. (*confusedly*) Jim!

JIM. (*pushes her out gently and slams the door after her—vaguely*) Go along! I got to study. I got to nurse Ella, too. Oh, I can do it! I can do anything for her! (*He sits down at the table and, opening the book, begins again to recite the line from Blackstone in a meaningless rhythm, tapping his forehead with his fist.* ELLA *enters noiselessly through the portières. She wears a red dressing-gown over her night-dress but is in her bare feet. She has a carving-knife in her right hand. Her eyes fasten on* JIM *with a murderous mania. She creeps up behind him. Suddenly he senses something and turns. As he sees her he gives a cry, jumping up and catching her wrist. She stands fixed, her eyes growing bewildered and frightened*).

JIM. (*aghast*) Ella! For God's sake! Do you want to murder me? (*She does not answer. He shakes her*).

ELLA. (*whimperingly*) They kept calling me names as I was walking along—I can't tell you what, Jim—and then I grabbed a knife——

JIM. Yes! See! This! (*She looks at it frightenedly*).

ELLA. Where did I——? I was having a nightmare—— Where did they go—I mean, how did I get here? (*With sudden terrified pleading—like a little girl*) Oh, Jim—don't ever leave me alone! I have such terrible dreams, Jim—promise you'll never go away!

JIM. I promise, Honey.

ELLA. (*her manner becoming more and more childishly silly*) I'll be a little girl—and you'll be old Uncle Jim who's been with us for years and years—— Will you play that?

JIM. Yes, Honey. Now you better go back to bed.

ELLA. (*like a child*) Yes, Uncle Jim. (*She turns to go. He pretends to be occupied by his book. She looks at him for a second—then suddenly asks in her natural woman's voice*) Are you studying hard, Jim?

JIM. Yes, Honey. Go to bed now. You need to rest, you know.

ELLA. (*stands looking at him, fighting with herself. A startling transformation comes over her face. It grows mean, vicious, full of jealous hatred. She cannot contain herself but breaks out harshly with a cruel, venomous grin*) You dirty nigger!

JIM. (*starting as if he'd been shot*) Ella! For the good Lord's sake!

ELLA. (*coming out of her insane mood for a moment, aware of something terrible, frightened*) Jim! Jim! Why are you looking at me like that?

JIM. What did you say to me just then?

ELLA. (*gropingly*) Why, I—I said—I remember saying, are you studying hard, Jim? Why? You're not mad at that, are you?

JIM. No, Honey. What made you think I was mad? Go to bed now.

ELLA. (*obediently*) Yes, Jim. (*She passes behind the portières.* JIM *stares before him. Suddenly her head is thrust*

out at the side of the portières. Her face is again that of a vindictive maniac) Nigger! (*The face disappears—she can be heard running away, laughing with cruel satisfaction.* JIM *bows his head on his outstretched arms but he is too stricken for tears*).

(*The Curtain Falls*)

ACT TWO

Scene Three

The same, six months later. The sun has just gone down. The Spring twilight sheds a vague, gray light about the room, picking out the Congo mask on the stand by the window. The walls appear shrunken in still more, the ceiling now seems barely to clear the people's heads, the furniture and the characters appear enormously magnified. Law books are stacked in two great piles on each side of the table. ELLA *comes in from the right, the carving-knife in her hand. She is pitifully thin, her face is wasted, but her eyes glow with a mad energy, her movements are abrupt and spring-like. She looks stealthily about the room, then advances and stands before the mask, her arms akimbo, her attitude one of crazy mockery, fear and bravado. She is dressed in the red dressing-gown, grown dirty and ragged now, and is in her bare feet.*

ELLA. I'll give you the laugh, wait and see! (*Then in a confidential tone*) He thought I was asleep! He called, Ella, Ella—but I kept my eyes shut, I pretended to snore. I fooled him good. (*She gives a little hoarse laugh*) This is the first time he's dared to leave me alone for months and months. I've been wanting to talk to you every day but this is the only chance—— (*With sudden violence—flourishing her knife*) What're you grinning about, you dirty nigger, you? How dare you grin at me? I guess you forget what you are! That's

always the way. Be kind to you, treat you decent, and in a second you've got a swelled head, you think you're somebody, you're all over the place putting on airs; why, it's got so I can't even walk down the street without seeing niggers, niggers everywhere. Hanging around, grinning, grinning—going to school—pretending they're white—taking examinations—— (*She stops, arrested by the word, then suddenly*) That's where he's gone—down to the mail-box—to see if there's a letter from the Board—telling him—— But why is he so long? (*She calls pitifully*) Jim! (*Then in a terrified whimper*) Maybe he's passed! Maybe he's passed! (*In a frenzy*) No! No! He can't! I'd kill him! I'd kill myself! (*Threatening the Congo mask*) It's you who're to blame for this! Yes, you! Oh, I'm on to you! (*Then appealingly*) But why d'you want to do this to us? What have I ever done wrong to you? What have you got against me? I married you, didn't I? Why don't you let Jim alone? Why don't you let him be happy as he is—with me? Why don't you let me be happy? He's white, isn't he—the whitest man that ever lived? Where do you come in to interfere? Black! Black! Black as dirt! You've poisoned me! I can't wash myself clean! Oh, I hate you! I hate you! Why don't you let Jim and I be happy? (*She sinks down in his chair, her arms outstretched on the table. The door from the hall is slowly opened and* JIM *appears. His bloodshot, sleepless eyes stare from deep hollows. His expression is one of crushed numbness. He holds an open letter in his hand*).

JIM. (*seeing* ELLA—*in an absolutely dead voice*) Honey—I thought you were asleep.

ELLA. (*starts and wheels about in her chair*) What's that? You got—you got a letter——?

JIM. (*turning to close the door after him*) From the Board of Examiners for admission to the Bar, State of New York—God's country! (*He finishes up with a chuckle of ironic self-pity so spent as to be barely audible*).

ELLA. (*writhing out of her chair like some fierce animal, the knife held behind her—with fear and hatred*) You didn't—you didn't—you didn't pass, did you?

JIM. (*looking at her wildly*) Pass? Pass? (*He begins to chuckle and laugh between sentences and phrases, rich, Negro laughter, but heart-breaking in its mocking grief*) Good Lord, child, how come you can ever imagine such a crazy idea? Pass? Me? Jim Crow Harris? Nigger Jim Harris—become a full-fledged Member of the Bar! Why the mere notion of it is enough to kill you with laughing! It'd be against all natural laws, all human right and justice. It'd be miraculous, there'd be earthquakes and catastrophes, the seven Plagues'd come again and locusts'd devour all the money in the banks, the second Flood'd come roaring and Noah'd fall overboard, the sun'd drop out of the sky like a ripe fig, and the Devil'd perform miracles, and God'd be tipped head first right out of the Judgment seat! (*He laughs, maudlinly uproarious*).

ELLA. (*her face beginning to relax, to light up*) Then you—you didn't pass?

JIM. (*spent—giggling and gasping idiotically*) Well, I should say not! I should certainly say not!

ELLA. (*with a cry of joy, pushes all the law books crashing to the floor—then with childish happiness she grabs* JIM *by both hands and dances up and down*) Oh, Jim, I knew it! I

knew you couldn't! Oh, I'm so glad, Jim! I m so happy! You're still my old Jim—and I'm so glad! (*He looks at her dazedly, a fierce rage slowly gathering on his face. She dances away from him. His eyes follow her. His hands clench. She stands in front of the mask—triumphantly*) There! What did I tell you? I told you I'd give you the laugh! (*She begins to laugh with wild unrestraint, grabs the mask from its place, sets it in the middle of the table and plunging the knife down through it pins it to the table*) There! Who's got the laugh now?

JIM. (*his eyes bulging—hoarsely*) You devil! You white devil woman! (*In a terrible roar, raising his fists above her head*) You devil!

ELLA. (*looking up at him with a bewildered cry of terror*) Jim! (*Her appeal recalls him to himself. He lets his arms slowly drop to his sides, bowing his head.* ELLA *points tremblingly to the mask*) It's all right, Jim! It's dead. The devil's dead. See! It couldn't live—unless you passed. If you'd passed it would have lived in you. Then I'd have had to kill you, Jim, don't you see?—or it would have killed me. But now I've killed it. (*She pats his hand*) So you needn't ever be afraid any more, Jim.

JIM. (*dully*) I've got to sit down, Honey. I'm tired. I haven't had much chance for sleep in so long—— (*He slumps down in the chair by the table*).

ELLA. (*sits down on the floor beside him and holds his hand. Her face is gradually regaining an expression that is happy, childlike and pretty*) I know, Jim! That was my fault. I wouldn't let you sleep. I couldn't let you. I kept thinking

if he sleeps good then he'll be sure to study good and then he'll pass—and the devil'll win!

JIM. (*with a groan*) Don't, Honey!

ELLA. (*with a childish grin*) That was why I carried that knife around—(*she frowns—puzzled*)—one reason—to keep you from studying and sleeping by scaring you.

JIM. I wasn't scared of being killed. I was scared of what they'd do to you after.

ELLA. (*after a pause—like a child*) Will God forgive me, Jim?

JIM. Maybe He can forgive what you've done to me; and maybe He can forgive what I've done to you; but I don't see how He's going to forgive—Himself.

ELLA. I prayed and prayed. When you were away taking the examinations and I was alone with the nurse, I closed my eyes and pretended to be asleep but I was praying with all my might: O God, don't let Jim pass!

JIM. (*with a sob*) Don't, Honey, don't! For the good Lord's sake! You're hurting me!

ELLA. (*frightenedly*) How, Jim? Where? (*Then after a pause—suddenly*) I'm sick, Jim. I don't think I'll live long.

JIM. (*simply*) Then I won't either. Somewhere yonder maybe—together—our luck'll change. But I wanted—here and now—before you—we—I wanted to prove to you—to myself—to become a full-fledged Member—so you could be proud—— (*He stops. Words fail and he is beyond tears*).

ELLA. (*brightly*) Well, it's all over, Jim. Everything'll be all right now. (*Chattering along*) I'll be just your little girl, Jim—and you'll be my little boy—just as we used to be, remember, when we were beaux; and I'll put shoe blacking on

my face and pretend I'm black and you can put chalk on your face and pretend you're white just as we used to do—and we can play marbles—only you mustn't all the time be a boy. Sometimes you must be my old kind Uncle Jim who's been with us for years and years. Will you, Jim?

JIM. (*with utter resignation*) Yes, Honey.

ELLA. And you'll never, never, never, never leave me, Jim?

JIM. Never, Honey.

ELLA. 'Cause you're all I've got in the world—and I love you, Jim. (*She kisses his hand as a child might, tenderly and gratefully*).

JIM. (*suddenly throws himself on his knees and raises his shining eyes, his transfigured face*) Forgive me, God—and make me worthy! Now I see Your Light again! Now I hear Your Voice! (*He begins to weep in an ecstasy of religious humility*) Forgive me, God, for blaspheming You! Let this fire of burning suffering purify me of selfishness and make me worthy of the child You send me for the woman You take away!

ELLA. (*jumping to her feet—excitedly*) Don't cry, Jim! You mustn't cry! I've got only a little time left and I want to play. Don't be old Uncle Jim now. Be my little boy, Jim. Pretend you're Painty Face and I'm Jim Crow. Come and play!

JIM. (*still deeply exalted*) Honey, Honey, I'll play right up to the gates of Heaven with you! (*She tugs at one of his hands, laughingly trying to pull him up from his knees as*

(*The Curtain Falls*)

DIFF'RENT

A Play in Two Acts

(1920)

CHARACTERS

Captain Caleb Williams
Emma Crosby
Captain John Crosby, *her father*
Mrs. Crosby, *her mother*
Jack Crosby, *her brother*
Harriet Williams, *Caleb's sister* (*later* Mrs. Rogers)
Alfred Rogers
Benny Rogers, *their son*

SCENES

ACT I

Parlor of the Crosby home on a side street of a seaport village in New England—mid-afternoon of a day in late spring in the year 1890.

ACT II

The same. Late afternoon of a day in the early spring of the year 1920.

DIFF'RENT

ACT ONE

DIFF'RENT

ACT ONE

SCENE. *Parlor of the* CROSBY *home. The room is small and low-ceilinged. Everything has an aspect of scrupulous neatness. On the left, forward, a stiff plush-covered chair. Farther back, in order, a window looking out on a vegetable garden, a black horsehair sofa, and another window. In the far left corner, an old mahogany chest of drawers. To the right of it, in rear, a window looking out on the front yard. To the right of this window is the front door, reached by a dirt path through the small lawn which separates the house from the street. To the right of door, another window. In the far right corner, a diminutive, old-fashioned piano with a stool in front of it. Near the piano on the right, a door leading to the next room. On this side of the room are also a small bookcase half filled with old volumes, a big open fireplace, and another plush-covered chair. Over the fireplace a mantel with a marble clock and a Rogers group. The walls are papered a brown color. The floor is covered with a dark carpet. In the center of the room there is a clumsy, marble-topped table. On the table, a large china lamp, a bulky Bible with a brass clasp, and several books that look suspiciously like cheap novels. Near the table, three plush-covered chairs, two of which are rockers. Several enlarged*

photos of strained, stern-looking people in uncomfortable poses are hung on the walls.

It is mid-afternoon of a fine day in late spring of the year 1890. Bright sunlight streams through the windows on the left. Through the window and the screen door in the rear the fresh green of the lawn and of the elm trees that line the street can be seen. Stiff, white curtains are at all the windows.

As the curtain rises, EMMA CROSBY *and* CALEB WILLIAMS *are discovered.* EMMA *is a slender girl of twenty, rather under the medium height. Her face, in spite of its plain features, gives an impression of prettiness, due to her large, soft blue eyes which have an incongruous quality of absent-minded romantic dreaminess about them. Her mouth and chin are heavy, full of a self-willed stubbornness. Although her body is slight and thin, there is a quick, nervous vitality about all her movements that reveals an underlying constitution of reserve power and health. She has light brown hair, thick and heavy. She is dressed soberly and neatly in her black Sunday best, style of the period.*

CALEB WILLIAMS *is tall and powerfully built, about thirty. Black hair, keen, dark eyes, face rugged and bronzed, mouth obstinate but good-natured. He, also, is got up in black Sunday best and is uncomfortably self-conscious and stiff therein.*

They are sitting on the horsehair sofa, side by side. His arm is about her waist. She holds one of his big hands in both of hers, her head leaning back against his shoulder, her eyes half closed in a dreamy contentedness. He stares before him rigidly, his whole attitude wooden and fixed as if he were posing for a photograph; yet his eyes are expressively tender and protecting when he glances down at her diffidently out of the corners without moving his head.

EMMA. (*sighing happily*) Gosh, I wish we could sit this way forever! (*Then after a pause, as he makes no comment except a concurring squeeze*) Don't you, Caleb?

CALEB. (*with another squeeze—emphatically*) Hell, yes! I'd like it, Emmer.

EMMA. (*softly*) I do wish you wouldn't swear so awful much, Caleb.

CALEB. S'cuse me, Emmer, it jumped out o' my mouth afore I thought. (*Then with a grin*) You'd ought to be used to that part o' men's wickedness—with your Pa and Jack cussin' about the house all the time.

EMMA. (*with a smile*) Oh, I haven't no strict religious notions about it. I'm hardened in sin so far's they're concerned. Goodness me, how would Ma and me ever have lived in the same house with them two if we wasn't used to it? I don't even notice their cussing no more. And I don't mind hearing it from the other men, either. Being sea-faring men, away from their women folks most of the time, I know it just gets to be part of their natures and they ain't responsible. (*Decisively*) But you're diff'rent. You just got to be diff'rent from the rest.

CALEB. (*amused by her seriousness*) Diff'rent? Ain't I a sea-farin' man, too?

EMMA. You're diff'rent just the same. That's what made me fall in love with you 'stead of any of them. And you've got to stay diff'rent. Promise me, Caleb, that you'll always stay diff'rent from them—even after we're married years and years.

CALEB. (*embarrassed*) Why—I promise to do my best by you, Emmer. You know that, don't ye? On'y don't git the notion in your head I'm any better'n the rest. They're all good men—most of 'em, anyway. Don't tell me, for instance, you

think I'm better'n your Pa or Jack—'cause I ain't. And I don't know as I'd want to be, neither.

EMMA. (*excitedly*) But you got to want to be—when I ask it.

CALEB. (*surprised*) Better'n your Pa?

EMMA. (*struggling to convey her meaning*) Why, Pa's all right. He's a fine man—and Jack's all right, too. I wouldn't hear a bad word about them for anything. And the others are all right in their way, too, I s'pose. Only—don't you see what I mean?—I look on you as diff'rent from all of them. I mean there's things that's all right for them to do that wouldn't be for you—in my mind, anyway.

CALEB. (*puzzled and a bit uneasy*) Sailors ain't plaster saints, Emmer,—not a darn one of 'em ain't!

EMMA. (*hurt and disappointed*) Then you won't promise me to stay diff'rent for my sake?

CALEB. (*with rough tenderness*) Oh, hell, Emmer, I'll do any cussed thing in the world you want me to, and you know it!

EMMA. (*lovingly*) Thank you, Caleb. It means a lot to me—more'n you think. And don't you think I'm diff'rent, too—not just the same as all the other girls hereabouts?

CALEB. 'Course you be! Ain't I always said that? You're wo'th the whole pack of 'em put together.

EMMA. Oh, I don't mean I'm any better. I mean I just look at things diff'rent from what they do—getting married, for example, and other things, too. And so I've got it fixed in my head that you and me ought to make a married couple—diff'rent from the rest—not that they ain't all right in their way.

CALEB. (*puzzled—uncertainly*) Waal—it's bound to be from

your end of it, you bein' like you are. But I ain't so sure o' mine.

EMMA. Well, I am!

CALEB. (*with a grin*) You got me scared, Emmer. I'm scared you'll want me to live up to one of them high-fangled heroes you been readin' about in them books. (*He indicates the novels on the table*).

EMMA. No, I don't. I want you to be just like yourself, that's all.

CALEB. That's easy. It ain't hard bein' a plain, ordinary cuss.

EMMA. You are not!

CALEB. (*with a laugh*) Remember, I'm warnin' you, Emmer; and after we're married and you find me out, you can't say I got you under no false pretenses.

EMMA. (*laughing*) I won't. I won't ever need to. (*Then after a pause*) Just think, it's only two days more before you and me'll be man and wife.

CALEB. (*squeezing her*) Waal, it's about time, ain't it?—after waitin' three years for me to git enough money saved—and us not seein' hide or hair of each other the last two of 'em. (*With a laugh*) Shows ye what trust I put in you, Emmer, when I kin go off on a two year whalin' vige and leave you all 'lone for all the young fellers in town to make eyes at.

EMMA. But lots and lots of the others does the same thing without thinking nothing about it.

CALEB. (*with a laugh*) Yes, but I'm diff'rent, like you says.

EMMA. (*laughing*) Oh, you're poking fun now.

CALEB. (*with a wink*) And you know as well's me that

some o' the others finds out some funny things that's been done when they was away.

EMMA. (*laughing at first*) Yes, but you know I'm diff'rent, too. (*Then frowning*) But don't let's talk about that sort o' ructions. I hate to think of such things—even joking. I ain't like that sort.

CALEB. Thunder, I know you ain't, Emmer. I was on'y jokin'.

EMMA. And I never doubted you them two years; and I won't when you sail away again, neither.

CALEB. (*with a twinkle in his eye*) No, even a woman'd find it hard to git jealous of a whale!

EMMA. (*laughing*) I wasn't thinking of whales, silly! But there's plenty of diversion going on in the ports you touched, if you'd a mind for it.

CALEB. Waal, I didn't have no mind for it, that's sartin. My fust vige as skipper, you don't s'pose I had time for no monkey-shinin', do ye? Why, I was that anxious to bring back your Pa's ship with a fine vige that'd make him piles o' money, I didn't even think of nothin' else.

EMMA. 'Cepting me, I hope?

CALEB. O' course! What was my big aim in doin' it if it wasn't so's we'd git married when I come to home? And then, s'far as ports go, we didn't tech at one the last year—'ceptin' when that durn tempest blowed us south and we put in at one o' the Islands for water.

EMMA. What island? You never told me nothing about that.

CALEB. (*growing suddenly very embarrassed as if some memory occurred to him*) Ain't nothin' to tell, that's why. Just an island near the Line, that's all. O'ny naked heathen livin'

there—brown colored savages that ain't even Christians. (*He gets to his feet abruptly and pulls out his watch*) Gittin' late, must be. I got to go down to the store and git some things for Harriet afore I forgets 'em.

EMMA. (*rising also and putting her hands on his shoulders*) But you did think of me and miss me all the time you was gone, didn't you?—same as I did you.

CALEB. 'Course I did. Every minute.

EMMA. (*nestling closer to him—softly*) I'm glad of that, Caleb. Well, good-by for a little while.

CALEB. I'll step in again for a spell afore supper—that is, if you want me to.

EMMA. Yes, of course I do, Caleb. Good-by. (*She lifts her face to his*).

CALEB. Good-by, Emmer. (*He kisses her and holds her in his arms for a moment.* JACK *comes up the walk to the screen door. They do not notice his approach*).

JACK. (*peering in and seeing them—in a joking bellow*) Belay, there! (*They separate with startled exclamations.* JACK *comes in grinning. He is a hulking, stocky-built young fellow of 25. His heavy face is sunburned, handsome in a coarse, good-natured animal fashion. His small blue eyes twinkle with the unconsciously malicious humor of the born practical joker. He wears high seaboots turned down from the knee, dirty cotton shirt and pants, and a yellow sou'wester pushed jauntily on the back of his head, revealing his disheveled, curly blond hair. He carries a string of cod heads*).

JACK. (*laughing at the embarrassed expression on their faces*) Caught ye that time, by gum! Go ahead! Kiss her again, Caleb. Don't mind me.

EMMA. (*with flurried annoyance*) You got a head on you just like one of them cod heads you're carrying—that stupid! I should think you'd be ashamed at your age—shouting to scare folks as if you was a little boy.

JACK. (*putting his arm about her waist*) There, kitty, don't git to spittin'. (*Stroking her hair*) Puss, puss, puss! Nice kitty! (*He laughs*).

EMMA. (*forced to smile—pushing him away*) Get away! You'll never get sense. Land sakes, what a brother to have!

JACK. Oh, I dunno. I ain't so bad, as brothers go—eh, Caleb?

CALEB. (*smiling*) I reckon you'll do, Jack.

JACK. See there! Listen to Caleb. You got to take his word—love, honor, and *obey*, ye know, Emmer.

EMMA. (*laughing*) Leave it to men folks to stick up for each other, right or wrong.

JACK. (*cockily*) Waal, I'm willin' to leave it to the girls, too. Ask any of 'em you knows if I ain't a jim-dandy to have for a brother. (*He winks at* CALEB *who grins back at him*).

EMMA. (*with a sniff*) I reckon you don't play much brother with them—the kind you knows. You may fool 'em into believing you're some pumpkins but they'd change their minds if they had to live in the same house with you playing silly jokes all the time.

JACK. (*provokingly*) A good lot on 'em 'd be on'y too damn glad to git me in the same house—if I was fool enough to git married.

EMMA. "Pride goeth before a fall." But shucks, what's the good paying any attention to you. (*She smiles at him affectionately*).

JACK. (*exaggeratedly*) You see, Caleb? See how she misuses me—her lovin' brother. Now you know what you'll be up against for the rest o' your natural days.

CALEB. Don't see no way but what I got to bear it, Jack.

EMMA. Caleb needn't fear. He's diff'rent.

JACK. (*with a sudden guffaw*) Oh, hell, yes! I was forgittin'. Caleb's a Sunday go-to-meetin' Saint, ain't he? Yes, he is!

EMMA. (*with real resentment*) He's better'n what you are, if that's what you mean.

JACK. (*with a still louder laugh*) Ho-ho! Caleb's one o' them goody-goody heroes out o' them story books you're always readin', ain't he?

CALEB. (*soberly—a bit disturbed*) I was tellin' Emmer not to take me that high.

JACK. No use, Caleb. She won't hear of it. She's got her head sot t'other way. You'd ought to heard her argyin' when you was gone about what a parson's pet you was. Butter won't melt in your mouth, no siree! Waal, love is blind—and deaf, too, as the feller says—and I can't argy no more 'cause I got to give Ma these heads. (*He goes to the door on right—then glances back at his sister maliciously and says meaningly*) You ought to have a talk with Jim Benson, Emmer. Oughtn't she, Caleb? (*He winks ponderously and goes off laughing uproariously*).

CALEB. (*His face worried and angry*) Jack's a durn fool at times, Emmer—even if he is your brother. He needs a good lickin'.

EMMA. (*staring at him—uneasily*) What'd he mean about Jim Benson, Caleb?

CALEB. (*frowning*) I don't know—ezactly. Makin' up foolishness for a joke, I reckon.

EMMA. You don't know—*exactly?* Then there is—something?

CALEB. (*quickly*) Not as I know on. On'y Jim Benson's one o' them slick jokers, same's Jack; can't keep their mouths shet or mind their own business.

EMMA. Jim Benson was mate with you this last trip, wasn't he?

CALEB. Yes.

EMMA. Didn't him and you get along?

CALEB. (*a trifle impatiently*) 'Course we did. Jim's all right. We got along fust rate. He just can't keep his tongue from waggin', that's all's the matter with him.

EMMA. (*uneasily*) What's it got to wag about? You ain't done nothing wrong, have you?

CALEB. Wrong? No, nothin' a man'd rightly call wrong.

EMMA. Nothing you'd be shamed to tell me?

CALEB. (*awkwardly*) Why—no, Emmer.

EMMA. (*pleadingly*) You'd swear that, Caleb?

CALEB. (*hesitating for a second—then firmly*) Yes, I'd swear. I'd own up to everything fair and square I'd ever done, if it comes to that p'int. I ain't shamed o' anything I ever done, Emmer. On'y—women folks ain't got to know everything, have they?

EMMA. (*turning away from him—frightenedly*) Oh, Caleb!

CALEB. (*preoccupied with his own thoughts—going to the door in rear*) I'll see you later, Emmer. I got to go up street now more'n ever. I want to give that Jim Benson a talkin' to

he won't forgit in a hurry—that is, if he's been tellin' tales. Good-by, Emmer.

EMMA. (*faintly*) Good-by, Caleb. (*He goes out. She sits in one of the rockers by the table, her face greatly troubled, her manner nervous and uneasy. Finally she makes a decision, goes quickly to the door on the right and calls*) Jack! Jack!

JACK. (*from the kitchen*) What you want?

EMMA. Come here a minute, will you?

JACK. Jest a second. (*She comes back by the table, fighting to conceal her agitation. After a moment,* JACK *comes in from the right. He has evidently been washing up, for his face is red and shiny, his hair wet and slicked in a part. He looks around for* CALEB) Where's Caleb?

EMMA. He had to go up street. (*Then coming to the point abruptly—with feigned indifference*) What's that joke about Jim Benson, Jack? It seemed to get Caleb all riled up.

JACK. (*with a chuckle*) You got to ask Caleb about that, Emmer.

EMMA. I did. He didn't seem to want to own up it was anything.

JACK. (*with a laugh*) 'Course he wouldn't. He don't 'preciate a joke when it's on him.

EMMA. How'd you come to hear of it?

JACK. From Jim. Met him this afternoon and me and him had a long talk. He was tellin' me all 'bout their vige.

EMMA. Then it was on the vige this joke happened?

JACK. Yes. It was when they put in to git water at them South Sea Islands where the tempest blowed 'em.

EMMA. Oh. (*Suspiciously*) Caleb didn't seem willing to tell me much about their touching there.

JACK. (*chuckling*) 'Course he didn't. Wasn't I sayin' the joke's on him? (*Coming closer to her—in a low, confidential tone, chucklingly*) We'll fix up a joke on Caleb, Emmer, what d'ye say?

EMMA. (*tortured by foreboding—resolved to find out what is back of all this by hook or crook—forcing a smile*) All right, Jack. I'm willing.

JACK. Then I'll tell you what Jim told me. And you put it up to Caleb, see, and pertend you're madder'n hell. (*Unable to restrain his mirth*) Ho-ho! It'll git him wild if you do that. On'y I didn't tell ye, mind. You heard it from someone else. I don't want to git Caleb down on me. And you'd hear about it from someone sooner or later 'cause Jim and the rest o' the boys has been tellin' the hull town.

EMMA. (*taken aback—frowning*) So all the town knows about it?

JACK. Yes, and they're all laffin' at Caleb. Oh, it ain't nothin' so out o' the ordinary. Most o' the whalin' men hereabout have run up against it in their time. I've heard Pa and all the others tellin' stories like it out o' their experience. On'y with Caleb it ended up so damn funny! (*He laughs*) Ho-ho! Jimminy!

EMMA. (*in a strained voice*) Well, ain't you going to tell me?

JACK. I'm comin' to it. Waal, seems like they all went ashore on them islands to git water and the native brown women, all naked a'most, come round to meet 'em same as they always does—wantin' to swap for terbaccer and other tradin' stuff with straw mats and whatever other junk they got. Them brown gals was purty as the devil, Jim says—that is, in their heathen, outlandish way—and the boys got makin' up to 'em;

and then, o' course, everything happened like it always does, and even after they'd got all the water they needed aboard, it took 'em a week to round up all hands from where they was foolin' about with them nigger women.

EMMA. (*in anguish*) Yes—but Caleb—he ain't like them others. He's diff'rent.

JACK. (*with a sly wink*) Oho, is he? I'm comin' to Caleb. Waal, seems 's if he kept aboard mindin' his own business and winkin' at what the boys was doin'. And one o' them gals —the purtiest on 'em, Jim says—she kept askin', where's the captain? She wouldn't have nothin' to do with any o' the others. She thought on'y the skipper was good enough for her, I reckon. So one night jest afore they sailed some o' the boys, bein' drunk on native rum they'd stole, planned to put up a joke on Caleb and on that brown gal, too. So they tells her the captain had sent for her and she was to swim right out and git aboard the ship where he was waitin' for her alone. That part of it was true enough 'cause Caleb was alone, all hands havin' deserted, you might say.

EMMA. (*letting an involuntary exclamation escape her*) Oh!

JACK. Waal, that fool brown gal b'lieved 'em and she swum right off, tickled to death. What happened between 'em when she got aboard, nobody knows. Some thinks one thing and some another. And I ain't sayin' nothin' 'bout it—(*With a wink*) but I know damn well what I'd 'a done in Caleb's boots, and I guess he ain't the cussed old woman you makes him out. But that part of it's got nothin' to do with the joke nohow. The joke's this: that brown gal took an awful shine to Caleb and when she saw the ship was gittin' ready to sail she raised ructions, standin' on the beach howlin' and screamin', and

beatin' her chest with her fists. And when they ups anchors, she dives in the water and swims out after 'em. There's no wind hardly and she kin swim like a fish and catches up to 'em and tries to climb aboard. At fust, Caleb tries to treat her gentle and argy with her to go back. But she won't listen, she gits wilder and wilder, and finally he gits sick of it and has the boys push her off with oars while he goes and hides in the cabin. Even this don't work. She keeps swimmin' round and yellin' for Caleb. And finally they has to p'int a gun at her and shoot in the water near her afore the crazy cuss gives up and swims back to home, howlin' all the time. (*With a chuckle*) And Caleb lyin' low in the cabin skeered to move out, and all hands splittin' their sides! Gosh, I wish I'd been there! It must have been funnier'n hell! (*He laughs loudly—then noticing his sister's stony expression, stops abruptly*) What're you pullin' that long face for, Emmer? (*Offendedly*) Hell, you're a nice one to tell a joke to!

EMMA. (*after a pause—forcing the words out slowly*) Caleb's comin' back here, Jack. I want you to see him for me. I want you to tell him——

JACK. Not me! You got to play this joke on him yourself or it won't work.

EMMA. (*tensely*) This ain't a joke, Jack—what I mean. I want you to tell him I've changed my mind and I ain't going to marry him.

JACK. What!

EMMA. I been thinking things over, tell him—and I take back my promise—and he can have back his ring—and I ain't going to marry him.

JACK. (*flabbergasted—peering into her face anxiously*) Say

—what the hell——? Are you tryin' to josh me, Emmer? Or are you gone crazy all of a sudden?

EMMA. I ain't joking nor crazy neither. You tell him what I said.

JACK. (*vehemently*) I will like ——— Say, what's come over you, anyhow?

EMMA. My eyes are opened, that's all, and I ain't going to marry him.

JACK. Is it—'count of that joke about Caleb I was tellin' you?

EMMA. (*her voice trembling*) It's 'count of something I got in my own head. What you told only goes to prove I was wrong about it.

JACK. (*greatly perturbed now*) Say, what's the matter? Can't you take a joke? Are you mad at him 'count o' that brown gal?

EMMA. Yes, I am—and I ain't going to marry him and that's all there is to it.

JACK. (*argumentatively*) Jealous of a brown, heathen woman that ain't no better'n a nigger? God sakes, Emmer, I didn't think you was that big a fool. Why, them kind o' women ain't women like you. They don't count like folks. They ain't Christians—nor nothin'!

EMMA. That ain't it. I don't care what they are.

JACK. And it wasn't Caleb anyhow. It was all her fixin'. And how'd you know he had anything to do with her—like that? I ain't said he did. Jim couldn't swear he did neither. And even if he did—what difference does it make? It ain't rightly none o' your business what he does on a vige. He didn't ask her to marry him, did he?

EMMA. I don't care. He'd ought to have acted diff'rent.

JACK. Oh golly, there you go agen makin' a durned creepin'-Jesus out of him! What d'you want to marry, anyhow—a man or a sky-pilot? Caleb's a man, ain't he?—and a damn good man and as smart a skipper as there be in these parts! What more d'you want, anyhow?

EMMA. (*violently*) I want you to shet up! You're too dumb stupid and bad yourself to ever know what I'm thinking.

JACK. (*resentfully*) Go to the devil, then! I'm goin' to tell Ma and sic her onto you. You'll maybe listen to her and git some sense. (*He stamps out, right, while he is speaking.* EMMA *bursts into sobs and throws herself on a chair, covering her face with her hands.* HARRIET WILLIAMS *and* ALFRED ROGERS *come up the path to the door in rear. Peering through the screen and catching sight of* EMMA, HARRIET *calls*) Emmer! (EMMA *leaps to her feet and dabs at her eyes with a handkerchief in a vain effort to conceal traces of her tears.* HARRIET *has come in, followed by* ROGERS. CALEB'S *sister is a tall, dark girl of twenty. Her face is plainly homely and yet attracts the eye by a certain boldly-appealing vitality of self-confident youth. She wears an apron and has evidently just come out of the kitchen.* ROGERS *is a husky young fisherman of twenty-four, washed and slicked up in his ill-fitting best*).

ROGERS. Hello, Emmer.

EMMA. (*huskily, trying to force a smile*) Hello, Harriet. Hello, Alfred. Won't you set?

HARRIET. No, I jest run over from the house a second to see if—— Where's Caleb, Emmer?

EMMA. He's gone up street.

HARRIET. And here I be waitin' in the kitchen for him to

bring back the things so's I can start his supper. (*With a laugh and a roguish look at* ROGERS) Dearie me, it ain't no use dependin' on a man to remember nothin' when he's in love.

ROGERS. (*putting his arm about her waist and giving her a squeeze—grinning*) How 'bout me? Ain't I in love and ain't I as reliable as an old hoss?

HARRIET. Oh, you! You're the worst of 'em all.

ROGERS. You don't think so. (*He tries to kiss her*).

HARRIET. Stop it. Ain't you got no manners? What'll Emmer think?

ROGERS. Emmer can't throw stones. Her and Caleb is worser at spoonin' than what we are. (HARRIET *breaks away from him laughingly and goes to* EMMA).

HARRIET. (*suddenly noticing the expression of misery on* EMMA's *face—astonished*) Why, Emmer Crosby, what's the matter? You look as if you'd lost your last friend.

EMMA. (*trying to smile*) Nothing. It's nothing.

HARRIET. It is, too! Why, I do believe you've been crying!

EMMA. No, I ain't.

HARRIET. You have, too! (*Putting her arms about* EMMA) Goodness, what's happened? You and Caleb ain't had a spat, have you, with your weddin' only two days off?

EMMA. (*with quick resentful resolution*) There ain't going to be any wedding.

HARRIET. What!

ROGERS. (*pricking up his ears—inquisitively*) Huh?

EMMA. Not in two days nor no time.

HARRIET. (*dumbfounded*) Why, Emmer Crosby! Whatever's got into you? You and Caleb must have had an awful spat!

ROGERS. (*with a man-of-the-world attitude of cynicism*) Don't take her so dead serious, Harriet. Emmer'll git over it like you all does.

EMMA. (*angrily*) You shet up, Alf Rogers! (MRS. CROSBY *enters bustlingly from the right. She is a large, fat, florid woman of fifty. In spite of her two hundred and more pounds she is surprisingly active, and the passive, lazy expression of her round moon face is belied by her quick, efficient movements. She exudes an atmosphere of motherly good nature. She wears an apron on which she is drying her hands as she enters.* JACK *follows her into the room. He has changed to a dark suit, is ready for "up street"*).

MRS. CROSBY. (*smiling at* HARRIET *and* ROGERS) Afternoon, Harriet—and Alf.

HARRIET. Afternoon, Ma.

ROGERS. Afternoon.

JACK. (*grinning*) There she be, Ma. (*Points to* EMMA) Don't she look like she'd scratch a feller's eyes out! Phew! Look at her back curve! Meow? Sptt-sptt! Nice puss! (*He gives a vivid imitation of a cat fight at this last. Then he and* ROGERS *roar with laughter and* HARRIET *cannot restrain a giggle and* MRS. CROSBY *smiles.* EMMA *stares stonily before her as if she didn't hear*).

MRS. CROSBY. (*good-naturedly*) Shet up your foolin', Jack.

JACK. (*pretending to be hurt*) Nobody in this house kin take a joke. (*He grins and beckons to* ROGERS) Come along, Alf. You kin 'preciate a joke. Come on in here till I tell you. (*The grinning* ROGERS *follows him into the next room where they can be heard talking and laughing during the following scene*).

MRS. CROSBY. (*smiling, puts her arms around* EMMA) Waal, Emmer, what's this foolishness Jack's been tellin' about——

EMMA. (*resentfully*) It ain't foolishness, Ma. I've made up my mind, I tell you that right here and now.

MRS. CROSBY. (*after a quick glance at her face—soothingly*) There, there! Let's set down and be comfortable. Me, I don't relish roostin' on my feet. (*She pushes* EMMA *gently into a rocker —then points to a chair on the other side of the table*) Set down, Harriet.

HARRIET. (*torn between curiosity and a sense of being one too many*) Maybe I'd best go to home and leave you two alone?

MRS. CROSBY. Shucks! Ain't you like one o' the family—Caleb's sister and livin' right next door ever since you was all children playin' together. We ain't got no secrets from you. Set down. (HARRIET *does so with an uncertain glance at the frozen* EMMA. MRS. CROSBY *has efficiently bustled another rocker beside her daughter's and sits down with a comfortable sigh*) There. (*She reaches over and takes one of her daughter's hands in hers*) And now, Emmer, what's all this fuss over? (*As* EMMA *makes no reply*) Jack says as you've sworn you was breakin' with Caleb. Is that true?

EMMA. Yes.

MRS. CROSBY. Hmm. Caleb don't know this yet, does he?

EMMA. No. I asked Jack to tell him when he comes back.

MRS. CROSBY. Jack says he won't.

EMMA. Then I'll tell him myself. Maybe that's better, anyhow. Caleb'll know what I'm driving at and see my reason—(*Bitterly*)—which nobody else seems to.

MRS. CROSBY. Hmm. You ain't tried me yet. (*After a pause*)

Jack was a dumb fool to tell you 'bout them goin's-on at them islands they teched. Ain't no good repeatin' sech things.

EMMA. (*surprised*) Did you know about it before Jack——

MRS. CROSBY. Mercy, yes. Your Pa heard it from Jim Benson fust thing they landed here, and Pa told me that night.

EMMA. (*resentfully*) And you never told me!

MRS. CROSBY. Mercy, no. 'Course I didn't. They's trouble enough in the world without makin' more. If you was like most folks I'd told it to you. Me, I thought it was a good joke on Caleb.

EMMA. (*with a shudder*) It ain't a joke to me.

MRS. CROSBY. That's why I kept my mouth shet. I knowed you was touchy and diff'rent from most.

EMMA. (*proudly*) Yes, I am diff'rent—and that's just what I thought Caleb was, too—and he ain't.

HARRIET. (*breaking in excitedly*) Is it that story about Caleb and that heathen brown woman you're talking about? Is that what you're mad at Caleb for, Emmer?

MRS. CROSBY. (*as* EMMA *remains silent*) Yes, Harriet, that's it.

HARRIET. (*astonished*) Why, Emmer Crosby, how can you be so silly? You don't s'pose Caleb took it serious, do you, and him makin' them fire shots round her to scare her back to land and get rid of her? Good gracious! (*A bit resentfully*) I hope you ain't got it in your head my brother Caleb would sink so low as to fall in love serious with one of them critters?

EMMA. (*harshly*) He might just as well.

HARRIET. (*bridling*) How can you say sech a thing! (*Sarcastically*) I ain't heard that Caleb offered to marry her, have you? Then you might have some cause—— But d'you s'pose

he's ever give her another thought? Not Caleb! I know him better'n that. He'd forgot all about the hull thing before they was out o' sight of land, I'll bet, and if them fools hadn't started this story going, he'd never remembered it again.

MRS. CROSBY. (*nodding*) That's jest it. Harriet's right, Emmer.

EMMA. Ma!

MRS. CROSBY. Besides, you don't know they was nothin' wrong happened. Nobody kin swear that for sartin. Ain't that so, Harriet?

HARRIET. (*hesitating—then frankly*) I don't know. Caleb ain't no plaster saint and I reckon he's as likely to sin that way as any other man. He wasn't married then and I s'pose he thought he was free to do as he'd a mind to 'til he was hitched up. Goodness sakes, Emmer, all the men thinks that—and a lot of 'em after they're married, too.

MRS. CROSBY. Harriet's right, Emmer. If you've been wide awake to all that's happened in this town since you was old enough to know, you'd ought to realize what men be.

HARRIET. (*scornfully*) Emma'd ought to have fallen in love with a minister, not a sailor. As for me, I wouldn't give a durn about a man that was too goody-goody to raise Cain once in a while—before he married me, I mean. Why, look at Alf Rogers, Emmer. I'm going to marry him some day, ain't I? But I know right well all the foolin' he's done—and still is doing, I expect. I ain't sayin' I like it but I do like him and I got to take him the way he is, that's all. If you're looking for saints, you got to die first and go to heaven. A girl'd never git married hereabouts if she expected too much.

MRS. CROSBY. Harriet's right, Emmer.

EMMA. (*resentfully*) Maybe she is, Ma, from her side. I ain't claiming she's wrong. Her and me just looks at things diff'rent, that's all. And she can't understand the way I feel about Caleb.

HARRIET. Well, there's one thing certain, Emmer. You won't find a man in a day's walk is any better'n Caleb—or as good.

EMMA. (*wearily*) I know that, Harriet.

HARRIET. Then it's all right. You'll make up with him, and I s'pose I'm a fool to be takin' it so serious. (*As* EMMA *shakes her head*) Oh, yes, you will. You wouldn't want to get him all broke up, would you? (*As* EMMA *keeps silent—irritably*) Story book notions, that's the trouble with you, Emmer. You're gettin' to think you're better'n the rest of us.

EMMA. (*vehemently*) No, I don't! Can't you see——

MRS. CROSBY. Thar, now! Don't you two git to fightin'—to make things worse.

HARRIET. (*repentantly, coming and putting her arms around* EMMA *and kissing her*) I'm sorry, Emmer. You know I wouldn't fall out with you for nothing or nobody, don't you? Only it gits me riled to think of how awful broke up Caleb'd be if—— But you'll make it all up with him when he comes, won't you? (EMMA *stares stubbornly before her. Before she has a chance to reply a roar of laughter comes from the next room as* JACK *winds up his tale*).

ROGERS. (*from the next room*) Gosh, I wished I'd been there! (*He follows* JACK *into the room. Both are grinning broadly.* ROGERS *says teasingly*) Reckon I'll take to whalin' 'stead o' fishin' after this. You won't mind, Harriet? From what I hears o' them brown women, I'm missin' a hull lot by stayin' to home.

HARRIET. (*in a joking tone—with a meaning glance at* EMMA) Go on, then! There's plenty of fish in the sea. Anyhow, I'd never git jealous of your foolin' with one o' them heathen critters. They ain't worth notice from a Christian.

JACK. Oho, ain't they! They're purty as pictures, Benson says. (*With a wink*) And mighty accommodatin' in their ways. (*He and* ROGERS *roar delightedly.* EMMA *shudders with revulsion*).

MRS. CROSBY. (*aware of her daughter's feeling—smilingly but firmly*) Get out o' this, Jack. You, too, Alf. Go on up street if you want to joke. You're in my way.

JACK. Aw right, Ma. Come on up street, Alf.

HARRIET. Wait. I'll go with you a step. I got to see if Caleb's got back with them supper things. (*They all go to the door in rear.* JACK *and* ROGERS *pass out, talking and laughing.* HARRIET *turns in the doorway—sympathetically*) I'll give Caleb a talking-to before he comes over. Then it'll be easy for you to finish him. Treat him firm but gentle and you'll see he won't never do it again in a hurry. After all, he wasn't married, Emmer—and he's a man—and what can you expect? Good-by. (*She goes*).

EMMA. (*inaudibly*) Good-by.

MRS. CROSBY. (*after a pause in which she rocks back and forth studying her daughter's face—placidly*) Harriet's right, Emmer. You give him a good talkin'-to and he won't do it again.

EMMA. (*coldly*) I don't care whether he does or not. I ain't going to marry him.

MRS. CROSBY. (*uneasy—persuasively*) Mercy, you can't act like that, Emmer. Here's the weddin' on'y two days off, and

everythin' fixed up with the minister, and your Pa and Jack has bought new clothes speshul for it, and I got a new dress——

EMMA. (*turning to her mother—pleadingly*) You wouldn't want me to keep my promise to Caleb if you knew I'd be unhappy, would you, Ma?

MRS. CROSBY. (*hesitatingly*) N-no, Emmer. (*Then decisively*) 'Course I wouldn't. It's because I know he'll make you happy. (*As* EMMA *shakes her head*) Pshaw, Emmer, you can't tell me you've got over all likin' for him jest 'count o' this one foolishness o' hisn.

EMMA. I don't love him—what he is now. I loved—what I thought he was.

MRS. CROSBY. (*more and more uneasy*) That's all your queer notions, and I don't know where you gits them from. Caleb ain't changed, neither have you. Why, Emmer, it'd be jest like goin' agen an act of Nature for you not to marry him. Ever since you was children you been livin' side by side, goin' round together, and neither you nor him ever did seem to care for no one else. Shucks, Emmer, you'll git me to lose patience with you if you act that stubborn. You'd ought to remember all he's been to you and forget this one little wrong he's done.

EMMA. I can't, Ma. It makes him another person—not Caleb, but someone just like all the others.

MRS. CROSBY. Waal, is the others so bad? Men is men the world over, I reckon.

EMMA. No, they ain't bad. I ain't saying that. Don't I like 'em all? If it was one of the rest—like Jim Benson or Jack, even—had done this I'd thought it was a joke, too. I ain't strict in judging 'em and you know it. But—can't you

see, Ma?—Caleb always seemed diff'rent—and I thought he was.

MRS. CROSBY. (*somewhat impatiently*) Waal, if he ain't, he's a good man jest the same, as good as any sensible girl'd want to marry.

EMMA. (*slowly*) I don't want to marry nobody no more. I'll stay single.

MRS. CROSBY. (*tauntingly*) An old maid! (*Then resentfully*) Emmer, d'you s'pose if I'd had your high-fangled notions o' what men ought to be when I was your age, d'you s'pose you'd ever be settin' there now?

EMMA. (*slowly*) No. I know from what I can guess from his own stories Pa never was no saint.

MRS. CROSBY. (*in a tone of finality as if this settled the matter*) There, now! And ain't he been as good a husband to me as ever lived, and a good father to you and Jack? You'll find out Caleb'll turn out the same. You think it over. (*She gets up—bustlingly*) And now I got to git back in the kitchen.

EMMA. (*wringing her hands—desperately*) Oh, Ma, why can't you see what I feel? Of course, Pa's good—as good as good can be——

CAPTAIN CROSBY. (*from outside the door which he has approached without their noticing him—in a jovial bellow*) What's that 'bout Pa bein' good? (*He comes in laughing. He is a squat, bow-legged, powerful man, almost as broad as he is long—sixty years old but still in the prime of health and strength, with a great, red, weather-beaten face seamed by sun wrinkles. His sandy hair is thick and disheveled. He is dressed in an old baggy suit much the worse for wear—striped*

cotton shirt open at the neck. He pats EMMA *on the back with a playful touch that almost jars her off her feet*) Thunderin' Moses, that's the fust time ever I heerd good o' myself by listenin'! Most times it's: "Crosby? D'you mean that drunken, good-for-nothin', mangy old cuss?" That's what I hears usual. Thank ye, Emmer. (*Turning to his wife*) What ye got to say now, Ma? Here's Emmer tellin' you the truth after you hair-pullin' me all these years 'cause you thought it wa'n't. I always told ye I was good, ain't I—good as hell I be! (*He shakes with laughter and kisses his wife a resounding smack*).

MRS. CROSBY. (*teasing lovingly*) Emmer don't know you like I do.

CROSBY. (*turning back to* EMMA *again*) Look-a-here, Emmer, I jest seen Jack. He told me some fool story 'bout you fallin' out with Caleb. Reckon he was joshin,' wa'n't he?

MRS. CROSBY. (*quickly*) Oh, that's all settled, John. Don't you go stirrin' it up again. (EMMA *seems about to speak but stops helplessly after one glance at her father*).

CROSBY. An' all 'count o' that joke they're tellin' 'bout him and that brown female critter, Jack says. Hell, Emmer, you ain't a real Crosby if you takes a joke like that serious. Thunderin' Moses, what the hell d'you want Caleb to be—a durned, he-virgin, sky-pilot? Caleb's a man wo'th ten o' most and, spite o' his bein' on'y a boy yit, he's the smartest skipper out o' this port and you'd ought to be proud you'd got him. And as for them islands, all whalin' men knows 'em. I've teched thar for water more'n once myself, and I know them brown females like a book. And I tells you, after a year or more aboard ship, a man'd have to be a goll-durned geldin' if he don't——

MRS. CROSBY. (*glancing uneasily at* EMMA) Ssshh! You come out in the kitchen with me, Pa, and leave Emmer be.

CROSBY. God A'mighty, Ma, I ain't sayin' nothin' agen Emmer, be I? I knows Emmer ain't that crazy. If she ever got religion that bad, I'd ship her off as female missionary to the damned yellow Chinks. (*He laughs*).

MRS. CROSBY. (*taking his arm*) You come with me. I want to talk with you 'bout somethin'.

CROSBY. (*going*) Aye-aye, skipper! You're boss aboard here. (*He goes out right with her, laughing.* EMMA *stands for a while, staring stonily before her. She sighs hopelessly, clasping and unclasping her hands, looking around the room as if she longed to escape from it. Finally she sits down helplessly and remains fixed in a strained attitude, her face betraying the conflict that is tormenting her. Slow steps sound from the path in front of the house.* EMMA *recognizes them and her face freezes into an expression of obstinate intolerance.* CALEB *appears outside the screen door. He looks in, coughs—then asks uncertainly*) It's me, Emmer. Kin I come in?

EMMA. (*coldly*) Yes.

CALEB. (*comes in and walks down beside her chair. His face is set emotionlessly but his eyes cannot conceal a worried bewilderment, a look of uncomprehending hurt. He stands uncomfortably, fumbling with his hat, waiting for her to speak or look up. As she does neither, he finally blurts out*) Kin I set a spell?

EMMA. (*in the same cold tone*) Yes. (*He lowers himself carefully to a wooden posture on the edge of a rocker near hers*).

CALEB. (*after a pause*) I seen Jim Benson. I give him hell. He won't tell no more tales, I reckon. (*Another pause*)

I stopped to home on the way back from the store. I seen Harriet. She says Jack'd told you that story they're all tellin' as a joke on me. (*Clenching his fists—angrily*) Jack's a durn fool. He needs a good lickin' from someone.

EMMA. (*resentfully*) Don't try to put the blame on Jack. He only told me the truth, didn't he? (*Her voice shows that she hopes against hope for a denial*).

CALEB. (*after a long pause—regretfully*) Waal, I guess what he told is true enough.

EMMA. (*wounded*) Oh!

CALEB. But that ain't no good reason for tellin' it. Them sort o' things ought to be kept among men. (*After a pause—gropingly*) I didn't want nothin' like that to happen, Emmer. I didn't mean it to. I was thinkin' o' how you might feel—even down there. That's why I stayed aboard all the time when the boys was ashore. I wouldn't have b'lieved it could happen—not to me. (*A pause*) I wish you could see them Islands, Emmer, and be there for a time. Then you might see—— It's hard 's hell to explain, and you havin' never seen 'em. Everything is diff'rent down there—the weather—and the trees and water. You git lookin' at it all, and you git to feel diff'rent from what you do to home here. It's purty hereabouts sometimes—like now, in spring—but it's purty there all the time—and down there you notice it and you git feelin'—diff'rent. And them native women—they're diff'rent. A man don't think of 'em as women—like you. But they're purty—in their fashion—and at night they sings—and it's all diff'rent like something you'd see in a painted picture. (*A pause*) That night when she swum out and got aboard when I was alone, she caught me by s'prise. I wasn't expectin' nothin'

o' that sort. I tried to make her git back to land at fust—but she wouldn't go. She couldn't understand enough English for me to tell her how I felt—and I reckon she wouldn't have seed my p'int anyhow, her bein' a native. (*A pause*) And then I was afeerd she'd catch cold goin' round all naked and wet in the moonlight—though it was warm—and I wanted to wrap a blanket round her. (*He stops as if he had finished*).

EMMA. (*after a long, tense pause—dully*) Then you own up—there really was something happened?

CALEB. (*after a pause*) I was sorry for it, after. I locked myself in the cabin and left her to sleep out on deck.

EMMA. (*after a pause—fixedly*) I ain't going to marry you, Caleb.

CALEB. Harriet said you'd said that; but I didn't b'lieve you'd let a slip like that make—such a diff'rence.

EMMA. (*with finality*) Then you can believe it now, Caleb.

CALEB. (*after a pause*) You got queer, strict notions, Emmer. A man'll never live up to 'em—with never one slip. But you got to act accordin' to your lights, I expect. It sort o' busts everythin' to bits for me—— (*His voice betrays his anguish for a second but he instantly regains his iron control*) But o' course, if you ain't willin' to take me the way I be, there's nothin' to do. And whatever you think is best, suits me.

EMMA. (*after a pause—gropingly*) I wish I could explain my side of it—so's you'd understand. I ain't got any hard feelings against you, Caleb—not now. It ain't plain jealousy—what I feel. It ain't even that I think you've done nothing terrible wrong. I think I can understand—how it happened—and make allowances. I know that most any man

would do the same, and I guess all of 'em I ever met has done it.

CALEB. (*with a glimmer of eager hope*) Then—you'll forgive it, Emmer?

EMMA. Yes, I forgive it. But don't think that my forgiving is going to make any diff'rence—'cause I ain't going to marry you, Caleb. That's final. (*After a pause—intensely*) Oh, I wish I could make you see—my reason. You don't. You never will, I expect. What you done is just what any other man would have done—and being like them is exactly what'll keep you from ever seeing my meaning. (*After a pause—in a last effort to make him understand*) Maybe it's my fault more'n your'n. It's like this, Caleb. Ever since we was little I guess I've always had the idea that you was—diff'rent. And when we growed up and got engaged I thought that more and more. And you was diff'rent, too! And that was why I loved you. And now you've proved you ain't. And so how can I love you any more? I don't, Caleb, and that's all there is to it. You've busted something way down inside me—and I can't love you no more.

CALEB. (*gloomily*) I've warned you often, ain't I, you was settin' me up where I'd no business to be. I'm human like the rest and always was. I ain't diff'rent. (*After a pause—uncertainly*) I reckon there ain't no use sayin' nothin' more. I'll go to home. (*He starts to rise*).

EMMA. Wait. I don't want you to go out of here with no hard feelings. You 'n' me, Caleb, we've been too close all our lives to ever get to be enemies. I like you, Caleb, same's I always did. I want us to stay friends. I want you to be like one of the family same's you've always been. There's no

reason you can't. I don't blame you—as a man—for what I wouldn't hold against any other man. If I find I can't love you—that way—no more or be your wife, it's just that I've decided—things being what they be and me being what I am —I won't marry no man. I'll stay single. (*Forcing a smile*) I guess there's worse things than being an old maid.

CALEB. I can't picture you that, Emmer. It's natural in some but it ain't in you. (*Then with a renewal of hope*) And o' course I want to stay friends with you, Emmer. There's no hard feelin's on my side. You got a right to your own way—even if—— (*Hopefully*) And maybe if I show you what I done wasn't natural to me—by never doin' it again—maybe the time'll come when you'll be willin' to forget——

EMMA. (*shaking her head—slowly*) It ain't a question of time, Caleb. It's a question of something being dead. And when a thing's died, time can't make no diff'rence.

CALEB. (*sturdily*) You don't know that for sure, Emmer. You're human, too, and as liable to make mistakes as any other. Maybe you on'y think it's dead, and when I come back from the next vige and you've had two years to think it over, you'll see diff'rent and know I ain't as bad as I seem to ye now.

EMMA. (*helplessly*) But you don't seem bad, Caleb. And two years can't make no change in me—that way.

CALEB. (*feeling himself somehow more and more heartened by hope*) I ain't givin' up hope, Emmer, and you can't make me. Not by a hell of a sight. (*With emphasis*) I ain't never goin' to marry no woman but you, Emmer. You can trust my word for that. And I'll wait for ye to change your mind, I don't give a durn how long it'll take—till I'm sixty years

old—thirty years if it's needful! (*He rises to his feet as he is speaking this last*).

EMMA. (*with a mournful smile*) You might just as well say for life, Caleb. In thirty years we'll both be dead and gone, probably. And I don't want you to think it's needful for you to stay single 'cause I——

CALEB. I ain't goin' to stay single. I'm goin' to wait for you. And some day when you realize men was never cut out for angels you'll——

EMMA. (*helplessly*) Me 'n' you'll never understand each other, Caleb, so long as we live. (*Getting up and holding out her hand*) Good-by, Caleb. I'm going up and lie down for a spell.

CALEB. (*made hopeless again by her tone—clasps her hand mechanically—dully*) Good-by, Emmer. (*He goes to the door in the rear, opens it, then hesitates and looks back at her as she goes out the door on the right without turning around. Suddenly he blurts out despairingly*) You'll remember what I told ye 'bout waitin', Emmer? (*She is gone, makes no reply. His face sets in its concealment mask of emotionlessness and he turns slowly and goes out the door as*

(*The Curtain Falls*)

DIFF'RENT

ACT TWO

ACT TWO

SCENE. *Thirty years after—the scene is the same but not the same. The room has a grotesque aspect of old age turned flighty and masquerading as the most empty-headed youth. There is an obstreperous newness about everything. Orange curtains are at the windows. The carpet has given way to a varnished hardwood floor, its glassy surface set off by three small, garish-colored rugs, placed with precision in front of the two doors and under the table. The wall paper is now a cream color sprayed with pink flowers. Seascapes, of the painted-to-order quality, four in number, in gilded frames, are hung on the walls at mathematically spaced intervals. The plush-covered chairs are gone, replaced by a set of varnished oak. The horsehair sofa has been relegated to the attic. A cane-bottomed affair with fancy cushions serves in its stead. A Victrola is where the old mahogany chest had been. A brand new piano shines resplendently in the far right corner by the door, and a bookcase with glass doors that pull up and slide in flanks the fireplace. This bookcase is full of installment-plan sets of uncut volumes. The table at center is of varnished oak. On it are piles of fashion magazines and an electric reading lamp. Only the old Bible, which still preserves its place of honor on the table, and the marble clock on the mantel, have survived the renovation and serve to emphasize it all the more by contrast.*

It is late afternoon of a day in the early spring of the year 1920.

As the curtain rises, EMMA *and* BENNY ROGERS *are discovered. She is seated in a rocker by the table. He is standing by the Victrola on which a jazz band record is playing. He whistles, goes through the motions of dancing to the music. He is a young fellow of twenty-three, a replica of his father in Act One, but coarser, more hardened and cocksure. He is dressed in the khaki uniform of a private in the United States Army. The thirty years have transformed* EMMA *into a withered, scrawny woman. But there is something revoltingly incongruous about her, a pitiable sham, a too-apparent effort to cheat the years by appearances. The white dress she wears is too frilly, too youthful for her; so are the high-heeled pumps and clocked silk stockings. There is an absurd suggestion of rouge on her tight cheeks and thin lips, of penciled make-up about her eyes. The black of her hair is brazenly untruthful. Above all there is shown in her simpering, self-consciously coquettish manner that laughable—and at the same time irritating and disgusting—mockery of undignified age snatching greedily at the empty simulacra of youth. She resembles some passé stock actress of fifty made up for a heroine of twenty.*

BENNY. (*as the records stops—switches off the machine*) Oh, baby! Some jazz, I'll tell the world!

EMMA. (*smiling lovingly at his back*) I'm glad you like it. It's one of them you picked out on the list.

BENNY. Oh, I'm a swell little picker, aw right. (*Turning to her*) Say, you're a regular feller—gettin' them records for me.

EMMA. (*coquettishly*) Well, if that ain't just like a man! Who told you I got them just for you?

BENNY. Well, didn't you?

EMMA. No indeedy! I only took your advice on what to get. I knew you'd know, being growed to a man of the world now since you was overseas. But I got 'em because I like them jazz tunes myself. They put life and ginger in an old lady like me—not like them slow, old-timey tunes.

BENNY. (*bends over chair—kiddingly*) You ain't old. That's all bunk.

EMMA. (*flattered*) Now, now, Benny!

BENNY. You ain't. You're a regular, up-to-date sport—the only live one in this dead dump. (*With a grin*) And if you fall for that jazz stuff, all you got to do now is learn to dance to it.

EMMA. (*giggling*) I will—if you'll teach me.

BENNY. (*struggling with a guffaw*) Oh, oui! Sure I will! We'll have a circus, me an' you. Say, you're sure one of the girls aw right, Aunt Emmer.

EMMA. Oh, you needn't think we're *all* so behind the times to home here just because you've been to France and all over.

BENNY. *You* ain't, I'll say, Aunt Emmer.

EMMA. And how often have I got to tell you not to call me Aunt Emmer?

BENNY. (*with a grin*) Oh, oui! My foot slipped. 'Scuse me, Emmer.

EMMA. (*delighted by his coarse familiarity*) That's better. Why, you know well enough I ain't your aunt anyway.

BENNY. I got to get used to the plain Emmer. They taught me to call you "aunt" when I was a kid. (EMMA *looks dis-*

pleased at this remark and BENNY *hastens to add cajolingly*) And you almost was my aunt-in-law one time from what I've heard. (*Winks at her cunningly*).

EMMA. (*flustered*) That was ages ago. (*Catching herself quickly*) Not so awful long really, but it's all so dead and gone it seems a long while.

BENNY. (*unthinkingly*) It was before I was born, wasn't it? (*Seeing her expression he hurries on*) Well, that ain't so darned long. Say, here's something I never could make out—how did you ever come to fall for Uncle Caleb?

EMMA. (*bridling quickly*) I never did. That's all talk, Benny. We was good friends and still are. I was young and foolish and got engaged to him—and then discovered I didn't like him that way. That's all there ever was to it.

BENNY. (*resentfully*) I can't figure how anybody'd ever like him anyway. He's a darn stingy, ugly old cuss, if you want my dope on him. I can't see him at all. I've hated him ever since Pa died and Ma and me had to go live next door with him.

EMMA. You oughtn't to say that. He's kind at bottom, spite of his rough ways, and he's brought you up.

BENNY. (*grumpily*) Dragged me up, you mean. (*With a calculating look at her out of the corners of his eyes*) He's a tight-wad and I hate folks that're tight with their coin. Spend and be a good sport, that's my motto. (*Flattering*) He'd ought to be more like you that way, Emmer.

EMMA. (*pleased—condescendingly*) Your Uncle Caleb's an old man, remember. He's set in his ways and believes in being strict with you—too strict, I've told him.

BENNY. He's got piles of money hoarded in the bank but

he's too mean even to retire from whalin' himself—goes right on makin' vige after vige to grab more and never spends a nickel less'n he has to. It was always like pryin' open a safe for me to separate him from a cent. (*With extreme disgust*) Aw, he's a piker. I hate him and I always did!

EMMA. (*looking toward the door apprehensively*) Ssshh!

BENNY. What you scared of? He don't get in from New Bedford till the night train and even if he's got to the house by this he'll be busy as a bird dog for an hour getting himself dolled up to pay you a call.

EMMA. (*perfunctorily*) I hope he's had a good vige and is in good health.

BENNY. (*roughly*) You needn't worry. He's too mean ever to get real sick. Gosh, I wish Pa'd lived—or Uncle Jack. They wasn't like him. I was only a kid when they got drowned, but I remember enough about 'em to know they was good sports. Wasn't they?

EMMA. (*rather primly*) They was too sporty for their own good.

BENNY. Don't you hand me that. That don't sound like you. You're a sport yourself. (*After a pause*) Say, it's nutty when you come to think of it—Uncle Caleb livin' next door all these years and comin' to call all the time when he ain't at sea.

EMMA. What's funny about that? We've always been good friends.

BENNY. (*with a grin*) It's just as if the old guy was still mashin' you. And I'll bet anything he's as stuck on you as he ever was—the old fool!

EMMA. (*with a coquettish titter*) Land sakes, Benny, a

body'd think you were actually jealous of your uncle the way you go on.

BENNY. (*with a mocking laugh*) Jealous! Oh, oui! Sure I am! Kin you blame me? (*Then seriously, with a calculating look at her*) No, all kiddin' aside, I know he'll run me down first second he sees you. Ma'll tell him all her tales, and he'll be sore at me right off. He's always hated me anyway. He was glad when I enlisted, 'cause that got him rid of me. All he was hopin' was that some German'd get me for keeps. Then when I come back he wouldn't do nothin' for me so I enlisted again.

EMMA. (*chiding—playfully*) Now, Benny! Didn't you tell me you enlisted again 'cause you were sick o' this small place and wanted to be out where there was more fun?

BENNY. Well, o' course it was that, too. But I could have a swell time even in this dump if he'd loosen up and give me some kale. (*Again with the calculating look at her*) Why, look here, right now there's a buddy of mine wants me to meet him in Boston and he'll show me a good time, and if I had a hundred dollars——

EMMA. A hundred dollars! That's an awful pile to spend, Benny.

BENNY. (*disgustedly*) Now you're talkin' tight like him.

EMMA. (*hastily*) Oh, no, Benny. You know better'n that. What was you sayin'—if you had a hundred dollars——?

BENNY. That ain't such a much these days with everything gone up so. If I went to Boston I'd have to get dolled up and everything. And this buddy of mine is a sport and a spender. Easy come, easy go is his motto. His folks ain't tight-wads like mine. And I couldn't show myself up as a

cheap skate by travelin' 'round with him without a nickel in my jeans and just spongin' on him. (*With the calculating glance to see what effect his words are having—pretending to dismiss the subject*) But what's the good of talkin'? I got a swell chance tellin' that to Uncle Caleb. He'd give me one look and then put a double padlock on his roll. But it ain't fair just the same. Here I'm sweatin' blood in the army after riskin' my life in France and when I get a leave to home, everyone treats me like a wet dog.

EMMA. (*softly*) Do you mean me, too, Benny?

BENNY. No, not you. You're diff'rent from the rest. You're regular—and you ain't any of my real folks, either, and ain't got any reason.

EMMA. (*coquettishly*) Oh, yes, I have a reason. I like you very, very much, Benny—better than anyone in the town —especially since you've been to home these last few times and come to call so often and I feel I've growed to know you. When you first came back from France I never would have recognized you as Harriet's Benny, you was so big and strong and handsome.

BENNY. (*uncomfortably*) Aw, you're kiddin'. But you can tell how good I think you are from me bein' over here so much —so you know I ain't lyin'. (*Made more and more uncomfortable by the ardent looks* EMMA *is casting at him*) Well, guess I'll be movin' along.

EMMA. (*pleadingly*) Oh, you mustn't go yet! Just when we're gettin' so friendly!

BENNY. Uncle Caleb'll be over soon and I don't want him to catch me here—nor nowhere else till he gets calmed down

after hearin' Ma's kicks about me. So I guess I better beat it up street.

EMMA. He won't come for a long time yet. I know when to expect him. (*Pleading ardently and kittenishly*) Do set down a spell, Benny! Land sakes, I hardly get a sight of you before you want to run away again. I'll begin to think you're only pretending to like me.

BENNY. (*seeing his calculations demand it*) Aw right—jest for a second. (*He looks about him, seeking a neutral subject for conversation*) Gee, you've had this old place fixed up swell since I was to home last.

EMMA. (*coquettishly*) Guess who I had it all done for, mostly?

BENNY. For yourself, of course.

EMMA. (*shaking her head roguishly*) No, not for me, not for me! Not that I don't like it but I'd never have gone to the trouble and expense for myself. (*With a sigh*) I s'pose poor Ma and Pa turned over in their graves when I ordered it done.

BENNY. (*with a sly grin*) Who d'you have it done for, then?

EMMA. For you! Yes, for you, Benny—so's you'd have a nice, up-to-date place to come to when you was on vacation from the horrid old army.

BENNY. (*embarrassed*) Well, it's great aw right. And it sure looks swell—nothing cheap about it.

EMMA. (*delighted*) As long as you like it, I'm satisfied. (*Then suddenly, wagging an admonishing finger at him and hiding beneath a joking manner an undercurrent of uneasiness*) I was forgetting I got a bone to pick with you, young man!

I heard them sayin' to the store that you'd been up callin' on that Tilly Small evenin' before last.

BENNY. (*with a lady-killer's carelessness*) Aw, I was passin' by and she called me in, that's all.

EMMA. (*frowning*) They said you had the piano goin' and was singing and no end of high jinks.

BENNY. Aw, these small town boobs think you're raising hell if you're up after eleven.

EMMA. (*excitedly*) I ain't blamin' you. But her—she ought to have better sense—at her age, too, when she's old enough to be your mother.

BENNY. Aw, say, she ain't half as old—— (*Catching himself*) Oh, she's an old fool, you're right there, Emmer.

EMMA. (*severely*) And I hope you know the kind of woman she is and has been since she was a girl.

BENNY. (*with a wink*) I wasn't born yesterday. I got her number long ago. I ain't in my cradle, get me! I'm in the army! Oui! (*Chuckles*).

EMMA. (*fidgeting nervously*) What'd you—what'd you do when you was there?

BENNY. Why, nothin'. I told her to cut the rough work and behave—and a nice time was had by all. (*He grins provokingly*).

EMMA. (*springs to her feet nervously*) I don't know what to think—when you act so queer about it.

BENNY. (*carelessly*) Well, don't think nothing wrong—'cause there wasn't. Bill Tinker was with me and we was both wishin' we had a drink. And Bill says, "Let's go see Tilly Small. She always has some buried and if we hand her a line of talk maybe she'll drag out the old bottle." So we did—

and she did. We kidded her for a couple of drinks. (*He snickers*).

EMMA. (*standing in front of him—fidgeting*) I want you to promise you won't go to see her no more. If you—if you want liquor now and again maybe I—maybe I can fix it so's I can get some to keep here for you.

BENNY. (*eagerly*) Say, that'd be great! Will you? (*She nods. He goes on carelessly*) And sure I'll promise not to see Tilly no more. Gosh, what do you think I care about her? Or about any dame in this town, for that matter—'ceptin' you. These small town skirts don't hand me nothin'. (*With a grin*) You forgot I was in France—and after the dames over there these birds here look some punk.

EMMA. (*sits down—wetting her lips*) And what—what are those French critters like?

BENNY. (*with a wink*) Oh, boy! They're some pippins! It ain't so much that they're better lookin' as that they've got a way with 'em—lots of ways. (*He laughs with a lascivious smirk*).

EMMA. (*unconsciously hitches her chair nearer his. The turn the conversation has taken seems to have aroused a hectic, morbid intensity in her. She continually wets her lips and pushes back her hair from her flushed face as if it were stifling her*) What do you mean, Benny? What kind of ways have they got—them French girls?

BENNY. (*smirking mysteriously*) Oh, ways of dressin' and doin' their hair—and lots of ways.

EMMA. (*eagerly*) Tell me! Tell me all about 'em. You needn't be scared—to talk open with me. I ain't as strict as

I seem—about hearin' things. Tell me! I've heard French girls was awful wicked.

BENNY. I don't know about wicked, but they're darned good sports. They'd do anything a guy'd ask 'em. Oui, tooty sweet! (*Laughs foolishly*).

EMMA. And what—what'd you ask 'em, for instance?

BENNY. (*with a wink*) Curiosity killed a cat! Ask me no questions and I'll tell you no lies.

EMMA. (*with queer, stupid insistence*) But won't you tell me? Go on!

BENNY. Can't be did, Aunt Emmer, can't be did! (*With a silly laugh*) You're too young. No, all I'll say is, that to the boys who've knocked around over there the girls in town here are just rank amatoors. They don't know how to love and that's a fact. (*He gets to his feet*) And as for an old bum like Tilly—not me! Well, I guess I'll hike along——

EMMA. (*getting up and putting a hand on his arm—feverishly*) No, don't go. Not yet—not yet. No, don't go.

BENNY. (*stepping away with an expression of repulsion*) Why not? What's the matter with you, Aunt Emmer? You look 's if you was gettin' sick. (*Before she can reply,* HARRIET'S *voice is heard calling*).

HARRIET. Benny! Benny! (*This acts like a pail of cold water on* EMMA *who moves away from* BENNY *quickly*).

EMMA. That's Harriet. It's your Ma calling, Benny.

BENNY. (*impatiently*) I know. That means Uncle Caleb has come and she's told him her stories and it's up to me to go catch hell. (*Stopping* EMMA *as she goes toward the door as if to answer* HARRIET'S *hail*) Don't answer, Aunt Emmer.

Let her come over here to look. I want to speak to her and find out how I stand before he sees me.

EMMA. (*doubtfully*) I don't know as she'll come. She's been actin' funny to me lately, Harriet has, and she ain't put her foot in my door the last month.

BENNY. (*as his mother's voice is heard much nearer, calling "Benny!"*) There! Sure she's comin'.

EMMA. (*flustered*) Land sakes, I can't let her see me this way. I got to run upstairs and tidy myself a little. (*She starts for the door at right*).

BENNY. (*flatteringly*) Aw, you look swell. Them new duds you got looks great.

EMMA. (*turning in the doorway—coquettishly*) Oh, them French girls ain't the only ones knows how to fix up. (*She flounces out.* BENNY *stands looking after her with a derisive grin of contempt. There is a sharp knock on the door in the rear.* BENNY *goes to open it, his expression turning surly and sullen.* HARRIET *enters. She wears an apron over her old-fashioned black dress with a brooch at the neck. Her hair is gray, her face thin, lined, and careworn, with a fretful, continuously irritated expression. Her shoulders stoop, and her figure is flabby and ugly. She stares at her son with resentful annoyance*).

HARRIET. Ain't you got sense enough, you big lump, to answer me when I call, and not have me shouting my lungs out?

BENNY. I never heard you callin'.

HARRIET. You're lyin' and you know it. (*Then severely*) Your uncle's to home. He's waitin' to talk to you.

BENNY. Let him wait. (*In a snarling tone*) I s'pose you've been givin' him an earful of lies about me?

HARRIET. I told him the truth, if that's what you mean. How you stole the money out of the bureau drawer——

BENNY. (*alarmed but pretending scorn*) Aw, you don't know it was me. You don't know nothin' about it.

HARRIET. (*ignoring this*) And about your disgracin' him and me with your drunken carryin's-on with that harlot, Tilly Small, night after night.

BENNY. Aw, wha'd you know about that?

HARRIET. And last but not least, the sneakin' way you're makin' a silly fool out of poor Emmer Crosby.

BENNY. (*with a grin*) You don't notice her kickin' about it, do you? (*Brusquely*) Why don't you mind your own business, Ma?

HARRIET. (*violently*) It's a shame, that's what it is! That I should live to see the day when a son of mine'd descend so low he'd tease an old woman to get money out of her, and her alone in the world. Oh, you're low, you're low all through like your Pa was—and since you been in the army you got bold so you ain't even ashamed of your dirtiness no more!

BENNY. (*in a snarling whisper*) That's right! Blame it all on me. I s'pose she ain't got nothin' to do with it. (*With a wink*) You oughter see her perform sometimes. You'd get wise to something then.

HARRIET. Shut up! You've got the same filthy mind your Pa had. As for Emmer, I don't hold her responsible. She's been gettin' flighty the past two years. She couldn't help it, livin' alone the way she does, shut up in this house all her life.

You ought to be 'shamed to take advantage of her condition—but shame ain't in you.

BENNY. Aw, give us a rest!

HARRIET. (*angrily*) Your Uncle Caleb'll give you a rest when he sees you! Him and me's agreed not to give you another single penny if you was to get down on your knees for it. So there! You can git along on your army pay from this out.

BENNY. (*worried by the finality in her tone—placatingly*) Aw, say, Ma, what's eatin' you? What've I done that's so bad? Gosh, you oughta know some of the gang I know in the army. You'd think I was a saint if you did. (*Trying a confidential tone*) Honest, Ma, this here thing with Aunt Emmer ain't my fault. How can I help it if she goes bugs in her old age and gets nutty about me? (*With a sly grin—in a whisper*) Gee, Ma, you oughta see her today. She's a scream, honest! She's upstairs now gettin' calmed down. She was gettin' crazy when your callin' stopped her. Wait till she comes down and you git a look! She'll put your eye out—all dolled up like a kid of sixteen and enough paint on her mush for a Buffalo Bill Indian——

HARRIET. (*staring at him with stern condemnation*) You're a worthless loafer, Benny Rogers, same as your Pa was.

BENNY. (*frustrated and furious*) Aw, g'wan with that bunk! (*He turns away from her*).

HARRIET. And I'm goin' to tell Emma about you and try to put some sense back into her head.

BENNY. Go ahead. You'll get fat runnin' me down to her!

HARRIET. And if my word don't have no influence, I'll tell your Uncle Caleb everything, and get him to talk to her. She'll mind him.

BENNY. (*defiantly*) You just try it, that's all!

HARRIET. I've been scared to do more'n hint about it to him. I'm hopin' any day Emma'll come out of this foolishness, and he'll never know.

BENNY. Aw!

HARRIET. If shame was in you, you'd remember your Uncle Caleb's been in love with Emma all his life and waited for her year after year hopin' in the end she'd change her mind and marry him. And she will, too, I believe, if she comes out of this fit in her sane mind—which she won't if you keep fussin' with her.

BENNY. (*with revengeful triumph*) She'll never marry the old cuss—I'll fix that!

HARRIET. Now you're showin' yourself up for what you are! And I kin see it's come to the p'int where I got to tell your Uncle Caleb everythin' no matter how it breaks him up. I got to do it for Emmer's sake as well as his'n. We got to get her cured of your bad influence once and for all. It's the only hope for the two of 'em.

BENNY. You just try it!

HARRIET. And as for you, you get back to the army where you b'long! And don't never expect another cent from me or Caleb 'cause you won't get it! And don't never come to see us again till you've got rid of the meanness and filth that's the Rogers part of you and found the honesty and decency that's the Williams part—if you got any of me in you at all, which I begin to doubt. (*Goes to the door in rear*) And now I'm goin' back to Caleb—and you better not let him find you here when he comes less'n you want a good hidin' for once in your life. (*She goes out*).

BENNY. (*stammering between fear and rage—shouting after her*) G'wan! Tell him! What the hell do I care? I'll fix him! I'll spill the beans for both of you, if you try to gum me! (*He stands in the middle of the room hesitating whether to run away or stay, concentrating his thoughts on finding some way to make good his bluff. Suddenly his face lights up with a cruel grin and he mutters to himself with savage satisfaction*) By God, that's it! I'll bet I kin work it, too! By God, that'll fix 'em! (*He chuckles and goes quickly to the door on right and calls up to the floor above*) Emmer! Emmer!

EMMA. (*her voice faintly heard answering*) Yes, Benny, I'm coming.

BENNY. (*he calls quickly*) Come down! Come down quick! (*He comes back to the center of the room where he stands waiting, planning his course of action*).

EMMA. (*appears in the doorway. Her face is profusely powdered—with nervous excitement*) Benny! What's the matter? You sounded so—why where's your Ma?

BENNY. Gone. Gone back to home.

EMMA. (*offendedly*) Without waiting to see me? Why, I only sat down for a minute to give you a chance to talk to her. I was coming right down. Didn't she want to see me? Whatever's got into Harriet lately?

BENNY. She's mad as thunder at you 'cause I come over here so much 'stead of stayin' to home with her.

EMMA. (*pleased*) Oh, is that why? Well, if she ain't peculiar! (*She sits in a rocker by the table*).

BENNY. (*with a great pretense of grief, taking one of her hands in his*) Say, Emmer—what I called you down for was—I want to say good-by and thank you for all you've done——

EMMA. (*frightenedly*) Good-by? How you say that! What——?

BENNY. Good-by for good this time.

EMMA. For good?

BENNY. Yep. I've got to beat it. I ain't got no home here no more. Ma and Uncle Caleb, they've chucked me out.

EMMA. Good gracious, what're you saying?

BENNY. That's what Ma come over to tell me—that Uncle Caleb'd said I'd never get another cent from him, alive or after he's dead, and she said for me to git back to the army and never to come home again.

EMMA. (*gasping*) She was only joking. She—they couldn't mean it.

BENNY. If you'd heard her you wouldn't think she was joking.

EMMA. (*as he makes a movement as if to go away*) Benny! You can't go! Go, and me never see you again, maybe! You can't! I won't have it!

BENNY. I got to, Emmer. What else is there for me to do when they've throwed me out? I don't give a damn about leaving them—but I hate to leave you and never see you again.

EMMA. (*excitedly—grabbing his arm*) You can't! I won't let you go!

BENNY. I don't want to—but what can I do?

EMMA. You can stay here with me.

BENNY. (*his eyes gleaming with satisfaction*) No, I couldn't. You know this dump of a town. Folks would be sayin' all sorts of bad things in no time. I don't care for myself. They're all down on me anyway because I'm diff'rent from small-town boobs like them and they hate me for it.

EMMA. Yes, you are diff'rent. And I'll show 'em I'm diff'rent, too. You can stay with me—and let 'em gossip all they've a mind to!

BENNY. No, it wouldn't be actin' square with you. I got to go. And I'll try to save up my pay and send you back what I've borrowed now and again.

EMMA. (*more and more wrought up*) I won't hear of no such thing. Oh, I can't understand your Ma and your Uncle Caleb bein' so cruel!

BENNY. Folks have been lyin' to her about me, like I told you, and she's told him. He's only too glad to believe it, too, long as it's bad.

EMMA. I can talk to your Uncle Caleb. He's always minded me more'n her.

BENNY. (*hastily*) Don't do that, for God's sake! You'd only make it worse and get yourself in Dutch with him, too!

EMMA. (*bewilderedly*) But—I—don't see——

BENNY. (*roughly*) Well, he's still stuck on you, ain't he?

EMMA. (*with a flash of coquetry*) Now, Benny!

BENNY. I ain't kiddin'. This is dead serious. He's stuck on you and you know it.

EMMA. (*coyly*) I haven't given him the slightest reason to hope in thirty years.

BENNY. Well, he hopes just the same. Sure he does! Why Ma said when she was here just now she'd bet you and him'd be married some day yet.

EMMA. No such thing! Why, she must be crazy!

BENNY. Oh, she ain't so crazy. Ain't he spent every durn evenin' of the time he's to home between trips over here with you—for the last thirty years?

EMMA. When I broke my engagement I said I wanted to stay friends like we'd been before, and we always have; but every time he'd even hint at bein' engaged again I'd always tell him we was friends only and he'd better leave it be that way. There's never been nothing else between us. (*With a coy smile*) And besides, Benny, you know how little time he's had to home between viges.

BENNY. I kin remember the old cuss marchin' over here every evenin' he was to home since I was a kid.

EMMA. (*with a titter of delight*) D'you know, Benny, I do actually believe you're jealous!

BENNY. (*loudly—to lend conviction*) Sure I'm jealous! But that ain't the point just now. The point is *he's* jealous of me—and you can see what a swell chance you've got of talkin' him over now, can't you! You'd only make him madder.

EMMA. (*embarrassedly*) He's getting foolish. What cause has he got——

BENNY. When Ma tells him the lies about us——

EMMA. (*excitedly*) What lies?

BENNY. I ain't goin' to repeat 'em to you but you kin guess, can't you, me being so much over here?

EMMA. (*springing to her feet—shocked but pleased*) Oh!

BENNY. (*turning away from her*) And now I'm going to blow. I'll stay at Bill Grainger's tonight and get the morning train.

EMMA. (*grabbing his arm*) No such thing! You'll stay right here!

BENNY. I can't—Emmer. If you was really my aunt, things'd be diff'rent and I'd tell 'em all to go to hell.

EMMA. (*smiling at him coquettishly*) But I'm glad I ain't your aunt.

BENNY. Well, I mean if you was related to me in some way. (*At some noise he hears from without, he starts frightenedly*) Gosh, that sounded like our front door slamming. It's him and he's coming over. I got to beat it out the back way. (*He starts for the door on the right*).

EMMA. (*clinging to him*) Benny! Don't go! You mustn't go!

BENNY. (*inspired by alarm and desire for revenge suddenly blurts out*) Say, let's me 'n' you git married, Emmer—tomorrow, eh? Then I kin stay! That'll stop 'em, damn 'em, and make 'em leave me alone.

EMMA. (*dazed with joy*) Married? You 'n' me? Oh, Benny, I'm too old. (*She hides her head on his shoulder*).

BENNY. (*hurriedly, with one anxious eye on the door*) No, you ain't! Honest, you ain't! You're the best guy in this town! (*Shaking her in his anxiety*) Say yes, Emmer! Say you will—first thing tomorrow.

EMMA. (*choking with emotion*) Yes—I will—if I'm not too old for you.

BENNY. (*jubilantly*) Tell him. Then he'll see where he gets off! Listen! I'm goin' to beat it to the kitchen and wait. You come tell me when he's gone. (*A knock comes at the door. He whispers*) That's him. I'm goin'.

EMMA. (*embracing him fiercely*) Oh, Benny! (*She kisses him on the lips. He ducks away from her and disappears off right. The knock is repeated.* EMMA *dabs tremblingly at her cheeks with a handkerchief. Her face is beaming with happiness and looks indescribably silly. She trips lightly to the door*

and opens it—forcing a light, careless tone) Oh, it's you, Caleb. Come right in and set. I was kind of expecting you. Benny—I'd heard you was due to home tonight. (*He comes in and shakes the hand she holds out to him in a limp, vague, absent-minded manner. In appearance, he has changed but little in the thirty years save that his hair is now nearly white and his face more deeply lined and wrinkled. His body is still erect, strong and vigorous. He wears dark clothes, much the same as he was dressed in Act One*).

CALEB. (*mechanically*) Hello, Emmer. (*Once inside the door, he stands staring about the room, frowning. The garish strangeness of everything evidently repels and puzzles him. His face wears its set expression of an emotionless mask but his eyes cannot conceal an inward struggle, a baffled and painful attempt to comprehend, a wounded look of bewildered hurt*).

EMMA. (*blithely indifferent to this—pleasantly*) Are you looking at the changes I've made? You ain't seen this room since, have you? Of course not. What am I thinking of? They only got through with the work two weeks ago. Well, what d' you think of it?

CALEB. (*frowning—hesitatingly*) Why—it's—all right, I reckon.

EMMA. It was so gloomy and old-timey before, I just couldn't bear it. Now it's light and airy and young-looking, don't you think? (*With a sigh*) I suppose Pa and Ma turned over in their graves.

CALEB. (*grimly*) I reckon they did, too.

EMMA. Why, you don't mean to tell me you don't like it neither, Caleb? (*Then as he doesn't reply,—resentfully*) Well, you always was a sot, old-fashioned critter, Caleb Williams, same

as they was. (*She plumps herself into a rocker by the table—then, noticing the lost way in which he is looking about him*) Gracious sakes, why don't you set, Caleb? You give me the fidgets standing that way! You ain't a stranger that's got to be invited, are you? (*Then suddenly realizing the cause of his discomfiture, she smiles pityingly, not without a trace of malice*) Are you looking for your old chair you used to set in? Is that it? Well, I had it put up in the attic. It didn't fit in with them new things.

CALEB. (*dully*) No, I s'pose it wouldn't.

EMMA. (*indicating a chair next to hers*) Do set down and make yourself to home. (*He does so gingerly. After a pause she asks perfunctorily*) Did you have good luck this voyage?

CALEB. (*again dully*) Oh, purty fair. (*He begins to look at her as if he were seeing her for the first time, noting every detail with a numb, stunned astonishment*).

EMMA. You're looking as well as ever.

CALEB. (*dully*) Oh, I ain't got nothin' to complain of.

EMMA. You're the same as me, I reckon. (*Happily*) Why I seem to get feelin' younger and more chipper every day, I declare I do. (*She becomes uncomfortably aware of his examination—nervously*) Land sakes, what you starin' at so?

CALEB. (*brusquely blurting out his disapproval*) You've changed, Emmer—changed so I wouldn't know you, hardly.

EMMA. (*resentfully*) Well, I hope you think it's for the best.

CALEB. (*evasively*) I ain't enough used to it yet— to tell.

EMMA. (*offended*) I ain't old-timey and old-maidy like I was, I guess that's what you mean. Well, I just got tired of mopin' alone in this house, waiting for death to take me and

not enjoyin' anything. I was gettin' old before my time. And all at once, I saw what was happenin' and I made up my mind I was going to get some fun out of what Pa'd left me while I was still in the prime of life, as you might say.

CALEB. (*severely*) Be that paint and powder you got on your face, Emmer?

EMMA. (*embarrassed by this direct question*) Why, yes—I got a little mite—it's awful good for your complexion, they say—and in the cities now all the women wears it.

CALEB. (*sternly*) The kind of women I've seed in cities wearin' it—— (*He checks himself and asks abruptly*) Wa'n't your hair turnin' gray last time I was to home?

EMMA. (*flustered*) Yes—yes—so it was—but then it started to come in again black as black all of a sudden.

CALEB. (*glancing at her shoes, stockings, and dress*) You're got up in them things like a young girl goin' to a dance.

EMMA. (*forcing a defiant laugh*) Maybe I will go soon's I learn—and Benny's goin' to teach me.

CALEB. (*keeping his rage in control—heavily*) Benny——

EMMA. (*suddenly bursting into hysterical tears*) And I think it's real mean of you, Caleb—nasty mean to come here on your first night to home—and—make—fun—of—my—clothes—and everything. (*She hides her face in her hands and sobs*).

CALEB. (*overcome by remorse—forgetting his rage instantly—gets up and pats her on the shoulder—with rough tenderness*) Thar, thar, Emmer! Don't cry, now! I didn' mean nothin'. Don't pay no 'tention to what I said. I'm a durned old fool! What the hell do I know o' women's fixin's anyhow? And I reckon I be old-fashioned and sot in my ideas.

EMMA. (*reassured—pressing one of his hands gratefully*) It

hurts—hearing you say—me 'n' you such old friends and——

CALEB. Forgit it, Emmer. I won't say no more about it. (*She dries her eyes and regains her composure. He goes back to his seat, his face greatly softened, looking at her with the blind eyes of love. There is a pause. Finally, he ventures in a gentle tone*) D'you know what time this be, Emmer?

EMMA. (*puzzled*) I don't know exactly, but there's a clock in the next room.

CALEB. (*quickly*) Hell, I don't mean that kind o' time. I mean—it was thirty years ago this spring.

EMMA. (*hastily*) Land sakes, don't let's talk of that. It only gets me thinking how old I am.

CALEB. (*with an affectionate smile*) We both got to realize now and then that we're gettin' old.

EMMA. (*bridling*) That's all right for you to say. You're twelve years older 'n me, don't forget, Caleb.

CALEB. (*smiling*) Waal, even that don't make you out no spring chicken, Emmer.

EMMA. (*stiffly*) A body's as old as they feels—and I feel right young.

CALEB. Waal, so do I as far as health goes. I'm as able and sound as ever. (*After a pause*) But, what I meant was, d'you remember what happened thirty years back?

EMMA. I suppose I do.

CALEB. D'you remember what I said that day?

EMMA. (*primly*) You said a lot that it's better to forget, if you ask me.

CALEB. I don't mean—that part of it. I mean when I was sayin' good-by, I said—— (*He gasps—then blurts it out*) I said I'd wait thirty years—if need be. (*After a pause*) I

know you told me time and again not to go back to that. On'y—I was thinkin' all this last vige—that maybe—now when the thirty years are past—I was thinkin' that maybe—— (*He looks at her humbly, imploring some encouragement. She stares straight before her, her mouth set thinly. He sighs forlornly and blunders on*) Thirty years—that's a hell of a long time to wait, Emmer—makin' vige after vige always alone—and feelin' even more alone in between times when I was to home livin' right next door to you and callin' on you every evenin'. (*A pause*) I've made money enough, I know—but what the hell good's that to me—long as you're out of it? (*A pause*) Seems to me, Emmer, thirty o' the best years of a man's life ought to be proof enough to you to make you forget—that one slip o' mine.

EMMA. (*rousing herself—forcing a careless tone*) Land sakes, I forgot all about that long ago. And here you go remindin' me of it!

CALEB. (*doggedly*) You ain't answered what I was drivin' at, Emmer. (*A pause; then, as if suddenly afraid of what her answer will be, he breaks out quickly*) And I don't want you to answer right now, neither. I want you to take time to think it all over.

EMMA. (*feebly evasive*) All right, Caleb, I'll think it over.

CALEB. (*after a pause*) Somehow—seems to me 's if—you might really *need* me now. You never did before.

EMMA. (*suspiciously*) Why should I need you now any more'n any other time?

CALEB. (*embarrassedly*) Oh, I just feel that way.

EMMA. It ain't count o' nothin' Harriet's been tellin' you, is

it? (*Stiffly*) Her 'n' me ain't such good friends no more, if you must know.

CALEB. (*frowning*) Her 'n' me nearly had a fight right before I came over here. (EMMA *starts*) Harriet lets her tongue run away with her and says dumb fool things she don't really mean. I didn't pay much 'tention to what she was sayin' —but it riled me jest the same. She won't repeat such foolishness after the piece o' my mind I gave her.

EMMA. What did she say?

CALEB. Oh, nothin' worth tellin'. (*A pause*) But neither you nor me ought to get mad at Harriet serious. We'd ought, by all rights, to make allowances for her. You know 's well as me what a hard time she's had. Bein' married to Alf Rogers for five years'd pizin' any woman's life.

EMMA. No, he wasn't much good, there's no denyin'.

CALEB. And now there's Benny drivin' her crazy.

EMMA. (*instantly defensive*) Benny's all right!

CALEB. (*staring at her sharply—after a pause*) No, that's jest it. He ain't all right, Emmer.

EMMA. He is, too! He's as good as gold!

CALEB. (*frowning—with a trace of resentment*) You kin say so, Emmer, but the facts won't bear you out.

EMMA. (*excitedly*) What facts, Caleb Williams? If you mean the nasty lies the folks in this town are mean enough to gossip about him, I don't believe any of 'em. I ain't such a fool.

CALEB. (*bitterly*) Then you've changed, Emmer. You didn't stop about believin' the fool stories they gossiped about me that time.

EMMA. You owned up yourself that was true!

CALEB. And Benny'd own up if he was half the man I was!

(*Angrily*) But he ain't a man noways. He's a mean skunk from truck to keelson!

EMMA. (*springing to her feet*) Oh!

CALEB. (*vehemently*) I ain't judged him by what folks have told me. But I've watched him grow up from a boy and every time I've come to home I've seed he was gittin' more 'n' more like his Pa—and you know what a low dog Alf Rogers turned out to be, and what a hell he made for Harriet. Waal, I'm sayin' this boy Benny is just Alf all over again—on'y worse!

EMMA. Oh!

CALEB. They ain't no Williams' blood left in Benny. He's a mongrel Rogers! (*Trying to calm himself a little and be convincing*) Listen, Emmer. You don't suppose I'd be sayin' it, do you, if it wasn't so? Ain't he Harriet's boy? Ain't I brought him up in my own house since he was knee-high? Don't you know I got some feelin's 'bout it and I wouldn't hold nothing agen him less'n I knowed it was true?

EMMA. (*harshly*) Yes, you would! You're only too anxious to believe all the bad you can about him. You've always hated him, he says—and I can see it's so.

CALEB. (*roughly*) You know damned well it ain't, you mean! Ain't I talked him over with you and asked your advice about him whenever I come to home? Ain't I always aimed to do all I could to help him git on right? You know damned well I never hated him! It's him that's always hated me! (*Vengefully*) But I'm beginning to hate him now—and I've good cause for it!

EMMA. (*frightenedly*) What cause?

CALEB. (*ignoring her question*) I seed what he was comin' to years back. Then I thought when the war come, and he was

drafted into it, that the army and strict discipline'd maybe make a man o' him. But it ain't! It's made him worse! It's killed whatever mite of decency was left in him. And I reckon now that if you put a coward in one of them there uniforms, he thinks it gives him the privilege to be a bully! Put a sneak in one and it gives him the courage to be a thief! That's why when the war was over Benny enlisted again 'stead o' goin' whalin' with me. He thinks he's found a good shield to cover up his natural-born laziness—and crookedness!

EMMA. (*outraged*) You can talk that way about him that went way over to France to shed his blood for you and me!

CALEB. I don't need no one to do my fightin' for me—against German or devil. And you know durned well he was only in the Quartermaster's Department unloadin' and truckin' groceries, as safe from a gun as you and me be this minute. (*With heavy scorn*) If he shed any blood, he must have got a nose bleed.

EMMA. Oh, you do hate him, I can see it! And you're just as mean as mean, Caleb Williams! All you've said is a wicked lie and you've got no cause——

CALEB. I ain't, eh? I got damned good cause, I tell ye! I ain't minded his meanness to me. I ain't even give as much heed to his meanness to Harriet as I'd ought to have, maybe. But when he starts in his sneakin' thievery with you, Emmer, I put my foot down on him for good and all!

EMMA. What sneakin' thievery with me? How dare you say such things?

CALEB. I got proof it's true. Why, he's even bragged all over town about bein' able to borrow all the money from you he'd a mind to—boastin' of what an old fool he was makin'

of you, with you fixin' up your house all new to git him to comin' over.

EMMA. (*scarlet—blazing*) It's a lie! He never said it! You're makin' it all up—'cause you're—'cause you're——

CALEB. 'Cause I'm what, Emmer?

EMMA. (*flinging it at him like a savage taunt*) 'Cause you're jealous of him, that's what! Any fool can see that!

CALEB. (*getting to his feet and facing her—slowly*) Jealous? Of Benny? How—I don't see your meanin' rightly.

EMMA. (*with triumphant malice*) Yes, you do! Don't pretend you don't! You're jealous 'cause you know I care a lot about him.

CALEB. (*slowly*) Why would I be jealous 'count o' that? What kind o' man d'you take me for? Don't I know you must care for him when you've been a'most as much a mother to him for years as Harriet was?

EMMA. (*wounded to the quick—furiously*) No such thing! You're a mean liar! I ain't never played a mother to him. He's never looked at me that way—never! And I don't care for him that way at all. Just because I'm a mite older 'n him—can't them things happen just as well as any other—what d'you suppose—can't I care for him same as any woman cares for a man? And I do! I care more'n I ever did for you! And that's why you're lying about him! You're jealous of that!

CALEB. (*staring at her with stunned eyes—in a hoarse whisper*) Emmer! Ye don't know what you're sayin', do ye?

EMMA. I do too!

CALEB. Harriet said you'd been actin' out o' your right senses.

EMMA. Harriet's mad because she knows Benny loves me

better 'n her. And he does love me! He don't mind my bein' older. He's said so! And I love him, too!

CALEB. (*stepping back from her in horror*) Emmer!

EMMA. And he's asked me to marry him tomorrow. And I'm going to! Then you can all lie all you've a mind to!

CALEB. You're—going to—marry Benny?

EMMA. First thing tomorrow. And since you've throwed him out of his house in your mad jealousness, I've told him he can stay here with me tonight. And he's going to!

CALEB. (*his fists clenching—tensely*) Where—where is the skunk now?

EMMA. (*hastily*) Oh, he ain't here. He's gone up street.

CALEB. (*starting for the door in rear*) I'm goin' to find the skunk.

EMMA. (*seizing his arms—frightenedly*) What're you going to do?

CALEB. (*between his clenched teeth*) I don't know, Emmer—I don't know—— On'y he ain't goin' to marry you, by God!

EMMA. Caleb! (*She tries to throw her arms about him to stop his going. He pushes her firmly but gently aside. She shrieks*) Caleb! (*She flings herself on her knees and wraps her arms around his legs in supplicating terror*) Caleb! You ain't going to kill him, Caleb? You ain't going to hurt him, be you? Say you ain't! Tell me you won't hurt him! (*As she thinks she sees a relenting softness come into his face as he looks down at her*) Oh, Caleb, you used to say you loved me! Don't hurt him then, Caleb,—for my sake! I love him, Caleb! Don't hurt him—just because you think I'm an old woman ain't no reason—and I won't marry you, Caleb. I won't—not even if you have waited thirty years. I don't love you. I love him!

And I'm going to marry him—tomorrow. So you won't hurt him, will you, Caleb—not when I ask you on my knees!

CALEB. (*breaking away from her with a shudder of disgust*) No, I won't touch him. If I was wantin' to git even with ye, I wouldn't dirty my hands on him. I'd let you marry the skunk and set and watch what happened—or else I'd offer him money not to marry ye—more money than the little mite you kin bring him—and let ye see how quick he'd turn his back on ye!

EMMA. (*getting to her feet—frenziedly*) It's a lie! He never would!

CALEB. (*unheeding—with a sudden ominous calm*) But I ain't goin' to do neither. You ain't worth it—and he ain't—and no one ain't, nor nothin'. Folks be all crazy and rotten to the core and I'm done with the whole kit and caboodle of 'em. I kin only see one course out for me and I'm goin' to take it. "A dead whale or a stove boat!" we says in whalin'—and my boat is stove! (*He strides away from her, stops, and turns back—savagely*) Thirty o' the best years of my life flung for a yeller dog like him to feed on. God! You used to say you was diff'rent from the rest o' folks. By God, if you are, it's just you're a mite madder'n they be! By God, that's all! (*He goes, letting the door slam to behind him*).

EMMA. (*in a pitiful whimper*) Caleb! (*She sinks into a chair by the table sobbing hysterically. Benny sneaks through the door on right, hesitates for a while, afraid that his uncle may be coming back*).

BENNY. (*finally, in a shrill whisper*) Aunt Emmer!

EMMA. (*raising her face to look at him for a second*) Oh, Benny! (*She falls to weeping again*).

BENNY. Say, you don't think he's liable to come back, do you?

EMMA. No—he'll—never come back here—no more. (*Sobs bitterly*).

BENNY. (*his courage returning, comes forward into the room*) Say, he's way up in the air, ain't he? (*With a grin*) Say, that was some ballin' out he give you!

EMMA. You—you heard what he said?

BENNY. Sure thing. When you got to shoutin' I sneaked out o' the kitchen into there to hear what was goin' on. (*With a complacent grin*) Say, you certainly stood up for me all right. You're a good old scout at that, d'you know it?

EMMA. (*raising her absurd, besmeared face to his, as if expecting him to kiss her*) Oh, Benny, I'm giving up everything I've held dear all my life for your sake.

BENNY. (*turning away from her with a look of aversion*) Well, what about it? Ain't I worth it? Ain't I worth a million played-out old cranks like him? (*She stares at him bewilderedly. He takes a handful of almonds from his pocket and begins cracking and eating them, throwing the shells on the floor with an impudent carelessness*) Hope you don't mind my havin' a feed? I found them out in the kitchen and helped myself.

EMMA. (*pitifully*) You're welcome to anything that's here, Benny.

BENNY. (*insolently*) Sure, I know you're a good scout. Don't rub it in. (*After a pause—boastfully*) Where did you get that stuff about askin' him not to hurt me? He'd have a swell chance! There's a lot of hard guys in the army have tried to get funny with me till I put one over on 'em. I'd like

to see him start something! I could lick him with my hands handcuffed.

EMMA. (*revolted*) Oh!

BENNY. (*resentfully*) Think I'm bluffin'? I'll show you sometime. (*He swaggers about the room—finally stopping beside her. With a cunning leer*) Say, I been thinkin' it over and I guess I'll call his bluff.

EMMA. (*confusedly*) What—do you mean?

BENNY. I mean what he said just before he beat it—that he could get me not to marry you if he offered me more coin than you got. (*Very interestedly*) Say, d'you s'pose the old miser really was serious about that?

EMMA. (*dazedly—as if she could not realize the significance of his words*) I—I—don't know, Benny.

BENNY. (*swaggering about again*) If I was only sure he wasn't stallin'! If I could get the old cuss to shell out that way! (*With a tickled chuckle*) Gosh, that'd be the real stunt aw right, aw right. Oui, oui! Maybe he wasn't kiddin' at that, the old simp! It's worth takin' a stab at, damned if it ain't. I ain't got nothin' to lose.

EMMA. (*frightenedly*) What—what're you talkin' about, Benny?

BENNY. Say, I think I'll go over and talk to Ma after a while. You can go over first to make sure he ain't there. I'll get her to put it up to him straight. If he's willin' to dig in his jeans for some real coin—real dough, this time!—I'll agree to beat it and not spill the beans for him with you. (*Threateningly*) And if he's too tight, I'll go right through with what I said I would, if only to spite him! That's me!

EMMA. You mean—if he's willing to bribe you with money, you won't marry me tomorrow?

BENNY. Sure! If he'll put up enough money. I won't stand for no pikin'.

EMMA. (*whimpering*) Oh, Benny, you're only jokin', ain't you? You can't—you can't mean it!

BENNY. (*with careless effrontery*) Why can't I? Sure I mean it!

EMMA. (*hiding her face in her hands—with a tortured moan*) Oh, Benny!

BENNY. (*disgustedly*) Aw, don't go ballin'! (*After a pause—a bit embarrassedly*) Aw, say, what d'you think, anyway? What're you takin' it so damned serious for—me askin' you to marry me, I mean? I was on'y sort of kiddin' anyway—just so you'd tell him and get his goat right. (*As she looks up at him with agonized despair. With a trace of something like pity showing in his tone*) Say, honest, Aunt Emmer, you didn't believe—you didn't think I was really stuck on you, did you? Ah, say, how could I? Have a heart! Why, you're as old as Ma is, ain't you, Aunt Emmer? (*He adds ruthlessly*) And I'll say you look it, too!

EMMA. (*cowering—as if he had struck her*) Oh! Oh!

BENNY. (*a bit irritated*) What's the use of blubberin', for God's sake? Can't you take it like a sport? Hell, I ain't lookin' to marry no one, if I can help it. What do I want a wife for? There's too many others. (*After a pause—as she still sobs—calculatingly*) Aw, come on, be a sport—and say, listen, if he ain't willin' to come across, I'll marry you all right, honest I will. (*More and more calculatingly*) Sure! If they mean that stuff about kickin' me out of home—sure I'll stay here

with you! I'll do anything you want. If you want me to marry you, all you've got to do is say so—anytime! Only not tomorrow, we'd better wait and see——

EMMA. (*hysterically*) Oh, go away! Go away!

BENNY. (*looking down at her disgustedly*) Aw, come up for air, can't you? (*He slaps her on the back*) Buck up! Be a pal! Tell me what your dope is. This thing's got me so balled up I don't know how I stand. (*With sudden fury*) Damn his hide! I'll bet he'll go and leave all he's got to some lousy orphan asylum now.

EMMA. Oh, go away! Go away!

BENNY. (*viciously*) So you're givin' me the gate, too, eh? I'd like to see you try it! You asked me to stay and I'll stick. It's all your fool fault that's got me in wrong. And now you want to shake me! This is what I get for foolin' around with an old hen like you that oughta been planted in the cemetery long ago! Paintin' your old mush and dressin' like a kid! Christ A'mighty!

EMMA. (*in a cry of despair*) Don't! Stop! Go away.

BENNY. (*suddenly alert—sharply*) Sh! I hear someone coming. (*Shaking her*) Stop—now, Emmer! Damn it, you gotta go to the door. Maybe it's him. (*He scurries into the room on right. There is a faint knock at the door.* EMMA *lifts her head. She looks horribly old and worn out. Her face is frozen into an expressionless mask, her eyes are red-rimmed, dull and lifeless. The knock is repeated more sharply.* EMMA *rises like a weary automaton and goes to the door and opens it.* HARRIET *is revealed standing outside*).

HARRIET. (*making no movement to come in—coldly*) I want to speak to Caleb.

EMMA. (*dully*) He ain't here. He left a while back—said he was goin' up street—I think.

HARRIET. (*worriedly*) Oh, land sakes! (*Then hostilely*) Do you know where Benny is?

EMMA. (*dully*) Yes, he's here.

HARRIET. (*contemptuously*) I might have guessed that! (*Icily formal*) Would you mind tellin' him I want to see him?

EMMA. (*turns and calls*) Benny! Here's your Ma!

BENNY. (*comes from the next room*) Aw right. (*In a fierce whisper as he passes* EMMA) What d'you tell her I was here for, you old fool?

EMMA. (*gives no sign of having heard him but comes back to her chair and sits down.* BENNY *slouches to the door—sullenly*) What d'you want, Ma?

HARRIET. (*coldly*) I wanted your Uncle Caleb, not you, but you'll have to do, bein' the only man about.

BENNY. (*suspiciously*) What is it?

HARRIET. (*a bit frightenedly*) I just heard a lot of queer noises down to the barn. Someone's in there, Benny, sure as I'm alive. They're stealin' the chickens, must be.

BENNY. (*carelessly*) It's only the rats.

HARRIET. (*angrily*) Don't play the idiot! This was a big thumpin' noise no rat'd make.

BENNY. What'd any guy go stealin' this early—(*As* HARRIET *turns away angrily—placatingly*) Aw right, I'm coming. I'll have a look if that'll satisfy you. Don't go gettin' sore at me again. (*While he is speaking he goes out and disappears after his mother.* EMMA *sits straight and stiff in her chair for a while, staring before her with waxy eyes. Then she gets to her feet and goes from window to window taking down all the curtains*

with quick mechanical movements. She throws them on a pile in the middle of the floor. She lifts down the framed pictures from the walls and piles them on the curtains. She takes the cushions and throws them on; pushes the rugs to the pile with her feet; sweeps everything off the table onto the floor. She does all this without a trace of change in her expression—rapidly, but with no apparent effort. There is the noise of running footsteps from outside and BENNY *bursts into the room panting for breath. He is terribly excited and badly frightened).*

BENNY. (*stops short as he sees the pile on the floor*) What the hell——

EMMA. (*dully*) The junk man's coming for them in the morning.

BENNY. (*too excited to be surprised*) To hell with that! Say, listen Aunt Emmer, he's hung himself—Uncle Caleb—in the barn—he's dead!

EMMA. (*slowly letting the words fall—like a beginner on the typewriter touching two new letters*) Caleb—dead!

BENNY. (*voluble now*) Dead as a door nail! Neck's busted. I just cut him down and carried him to home. Say, you've got to come over and help look after Ma. She's goin' bugs. I can't do nothin' with her.

EMMA. (*as before*) Caleb hanged himself—in the barn?

BENNY. Yes—and made a sure job of it. (*With morbid interest in the details*) He got a halter and made a noose of the rope for his neck and climbed up in the loft and hitched the leather end to a beam and then let himself drop. He must have kicked in that quick! (*He snaps his fingers—then urgently*) Say, come on. Come on over 'n' help me with Ma, can't you? She's goin' wild. I can't do nothin'!

EMMA. (*vaguely*) I'll be over—in a minute. (*Then with a sudden air of having decided something irrevocably*) I got to go down to the barn.

BENNY. Barn? Say, are you crazy? He ain't there now. I told you I carried him home.

EMMA. I mean—my barn. I got to go down——

BENNY. (*exasperated*) Oh hell! You're as bad as Ma! Everyone's lost their heads but me. Well, I got to get someone else, that's all. (*He rushes out rear, slamming the door behind him*).

EMMA. (*after a tense pause—with a sudden outburst of wild grief*) Caleb! (*Then in a strange whisper*) Wait, Caleb, I'm going down to the barn. (*She moves like a sleepwalker toward the door in the rear as*

(*The Curtain Falls*)

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